

Commentary

July-August 2000

In Asian America

Tamar Jacoby

Were the Palestinians Expelled?

Efraim Karsh

Bellow at 85, Roth at 67

Norman Podhoretz

How to Think About Humanitarian War

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Tales of My Great-Grandfathers

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Prozac, with Knife

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Books in Review

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The Globalization of the Fight Against Disease

By Harvey Bale, Ph.D.

While the burden of many diseases, such as AIDS and other infectious diseases, has been globally distributed, pharmaceutical research efforts to find effective pharmaceutical interventions have been concentrated in a few industrial regions – Europe, North America and Japan.

Even for diseases predominantly occurring in developing countries – malaria, TB, trachoma and respiratory diseases – drug research and development is insignificant except in those industrial countries where such diseases remain a threat primarily through external communication links. This lack of globalized drug research is in spite of the educational and scientific levels achieved in such countries as India, Brazil, China, Egypt and Argentina.

Until recently many important developing countries gave no incentives to local researchers and pharmaceutical companies to discover and develop new drugs. Instead, through the absence of patent protection, local drug companies were encouraged only to copy innovative drugs coming from elsewhere. As the large majority of innovative medicines, including vaccines, are discovered and developed by commercial pharmaceutical and biotechnology enterprises, the lack of protection for patents, trademarks and commercial proprietary information in the developing world gave over the management of R&D in all disease areas entirely to “multinational” companies. Not providing patent protection to medicines was defended on the grounds of “public health” – i.e., the “common sense” theory that patents lead to high drug costs.

This started to change more than a decade ago. Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, *et al* adopted patent protection for medicines, and then more recently China and Brazil reversed earlier policies and recognized the value of intellectual property

rights. These countries are now shifting more efforts toward drug discovery and development, and are attracting multinational partners to develop and produce medicines locally.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there is now promise of further globalization of drug research as a result of recent international agreements, particularly the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Under this agreement, anti-counterfeiting efforts will be strengthened, patents will gradually come into force and companies should be able to protect proprietary data and information.

However, a debate still continues over whether these new incentives to encourage drug discovery will impair people's access to essential medicines in poorer countries. The Director General of the World Health Organisation has stated that today about a third of the world's population lacks “guaranteed access to essential drugs” and most of these also lack access to primary healthcare services. Don't patents, which give pharmaceutical and biotechnology innovators an exclusive right to exploit their inventions for a limited amount of time (effectively, 8-10 years under TRIPS), create *de facto* “monopolies” to be exploited by patent holders?

In fact, there are some two-dozen new drug and vaccine products introduced to the world market each year, amounting to a small proportion of the healthcare expenditure in most countries, especially developing ones. These products must compete with older, patent-expired products and other newly appearing patented variations that have similar therapeutic effects – witness the simultaneous appearance a couple of years ago of several innovative drugs in the protease inhibitor class to treat HIV/AIDS. Further, patents do not apply retroactively to products pre-existing in the marketplace.

The logical and empirical evidence suggests for the above reasons that patents do not

cause a general rise in the prices of drugs in developed or developing countries. In developing countries that have adopted or strengthened pharmaceutical patent protection in recent years there is little or no pressure to go backwards and repeal the patent system – which US President Abraham Lincoln said 140 years ago has benefited society by adding “the fuel of interest to the fire of genius.”

The new system protecting patents will accelerate the search for needed cures globally

This is not to say that access to medicines in poorer countries is not an issue. In response to poor financing capabilities at the national and international levels, there are major long-term donation programs instituted by pharmaceutical companies for such debilitating diseases as trachoma, filariasis and river blindness. But the issue is one of financing, not patents. For example, the patent system has produced vaccines for infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B and meningitis. However, these vaccines, despite efforts of companies to make them more accessible to developing countries, are underused because of the lack of a global strategy requiring adequate national and international financing mechanisms.

The new system protecting patents will accelerate the search for needed cures globally. TRIPS will help harness genius to the struggle against disease.

Dr. Bale is Director General of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations (IFPMA) in Geneva, Switzerland, which represents the research-based pharmaceutical industry and other manufacturers of prescription medicines, worldwide. For more information please see www.ifpma.org or call +41 (22) 340 1200.

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Letters from Readers

Big Government

TO THE EDITOR:

Christopher C. DeMuth ["Why the Era of Big Government Isn't Over," April] passes lightly over the main reason the era of big government continues: most Americans *want* the government to help them get through life. Mr. DeMuth seems to believe that most Americans are as well off as he is. His article glitters with exaggerations—describing America, for example, as "a mass-upper-middle-class society"—and bizarre untruths, like his claim that the United States is "the most egalitarian of any advanced, prosperous society." The reality is that economic inequality is more pronounced in the United States than in any other industrial democracy. Moreover, since the recession of 1973, real income for the poorest two-thirds of Americans has declined an average of 1 percent a year.

If the income gap con-

tinues to grow, and I believe it will, there will be a popular demand for income equality. Then the era of big government will truly begin.

JOHN ENGELMAN
Walnut Creek, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Everyone supposedly knows that big government is bad and smaller government is better—more efficient and effective, closer to the people, ultimately more democratic. Relying on this truism, Christopher C. DeMuth makes a persuasive case that big government is still with us, and may even be growing. The only problem is that the truism is not true.

Social Security is one of the biggest government programs. A few years ago, magazines were filled with dire warnings that the aging baby boomers would soon bankrupt the Social Security system. Now that we debate how best to spend a trillion-dollar surplus in the next decade, the

issue has faded. With his genius for sensing public opinion, President Clinton has made saving Social Security one of his top priorities. For all its size, in other words, Social Security is also popular. Nothing destroyed the Gingrich revolution more than the perception that the Republicans would gut or cut Social Security. Maybe the American people know something Mr. DeMuth does not.

The more important debate is between proponents of means-tested programs (based on income) and supporters of universal programs (for broad categories of people). The old adage still holds: programs just for the poor become poor programs. Thus, if I am a working person in the lower middle class, just barely ineligible for welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, and housing subsidies, and I see my neighbor, much like me but barely eligible for all these benefits, I am likely to become embittered, the ste-

reotypical hard-hat bigot. By contrast, I treasure my benefits under a universal program like Social Security. We need some unity in America, and only such universal programs can provide it.

DONALD FELDSTEIN
Teaneck, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

In his extraordinarily important article, Christopher C. DeMuth contends that an increase in executive-branch initiatives is what best explains the persistence of "big government." Although highly informative and powerfully reasoned, his argument gives too little weight to the role of the judicial branch in producing the erosion of democratic values he describes. Three examples will illustrate the point.

One of the major devices by which the judiciary has enhanced its power is the class-action suit, which enables lawyers to shape public policy by exposing pri-

vate defendants to litigation that is prohibitively dangerous to fight, or by suing public bodies and entering into stipulated "settlements" (e.g., for the governance of prisons or the administration of welfare systems) that are indistinguishable from legislation. The federal rule of civil procedure that allows class actions dates only to 1967, and like all such rules is subject to plenary control by Congress, which could quickly curb class-action excesses by amendment. "Law" that is now made in class actions, far beneath the radar of public debate, would then have to be made either in Congress or not at all.

The failure to regulate awards of punitive damages and attorney fees in the federal courts is another shocking omission on the part of Congress. Punitive damages are an inherently lawless, unjustifiable exaction, which the Supreme Court has tried, and failed, to control. Congress could step in to prevent this unconscionable enrichment of the private bar.

Finally, I have never understood why the judiciary committees of Congress do not conduct oversight hearings into the behavior of federal judges as other committees routinely do in the case of executive officers. Given the enormous discretion judges enjoy to make law, often relying on a judicial determination that Congress has authorized such "public litigation," there can be no credible objection to such hearings on grounds of "judicial independence." The result would be a greater degree of that political accountability whose decline Mr. DeMuth chronicles.

The failure of Congress

to address even one of these issues in nearly six years of Republican control of both houses is a grave indictment of the GOP's leadership.

MICHAEL W. SCHWARTZ
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Congress itself is complicit in the creation of the "unbounded administrative government" that Christopher C. DeMuth describes. Not wishing to touch issues that engender conflicting opinions in their constituencies, our representatives have, by nonfeasance and through the creation of vague legislation, left voids that appointed activists in the executive and judicial branches have been only too eager to fill. An egregious example of this has been the distorted enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which has led to affirmative-action mandates that are in direct conflict with the act itself.

The solution for the problems adduced by Mr. DeMuth lies in Congress's exercising the legislative powers clearly set forth in Article One of the Constitution. That Congress does not so act is a function not of its laziness but of its constant preoccupation with fund-raising and reelection.

FREDERIC WILE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Christopher C. DeMuth sets forth some of the realities of a U.S. government that is growing not only in size but also in complexity. In the long run, the latter phenomenon may be even more destructive of democratic values and effective management of the public business than the former. The more complex govern-

ment becomes, the less the average citizen can understand it, and the more indifferent he becomes toward the entire process.

As a result of the evolving conditions Mr. DeMuth describes, we see experts, technicians, systems analysts, bureaucrats, and special pleaders of all kinds taking over the mechanics of the governmental process. Meanwhile, our elected officials stand by, truculent and assertive as usual but completely uncertain how to conduct public affairs. To make matters worse, the media simply ignore government issues they do not understand or find boring.

JOSEPH C. DOHERTY
Chestertown, Maryland

CHRISTOPHER C. DEMUTH writes:

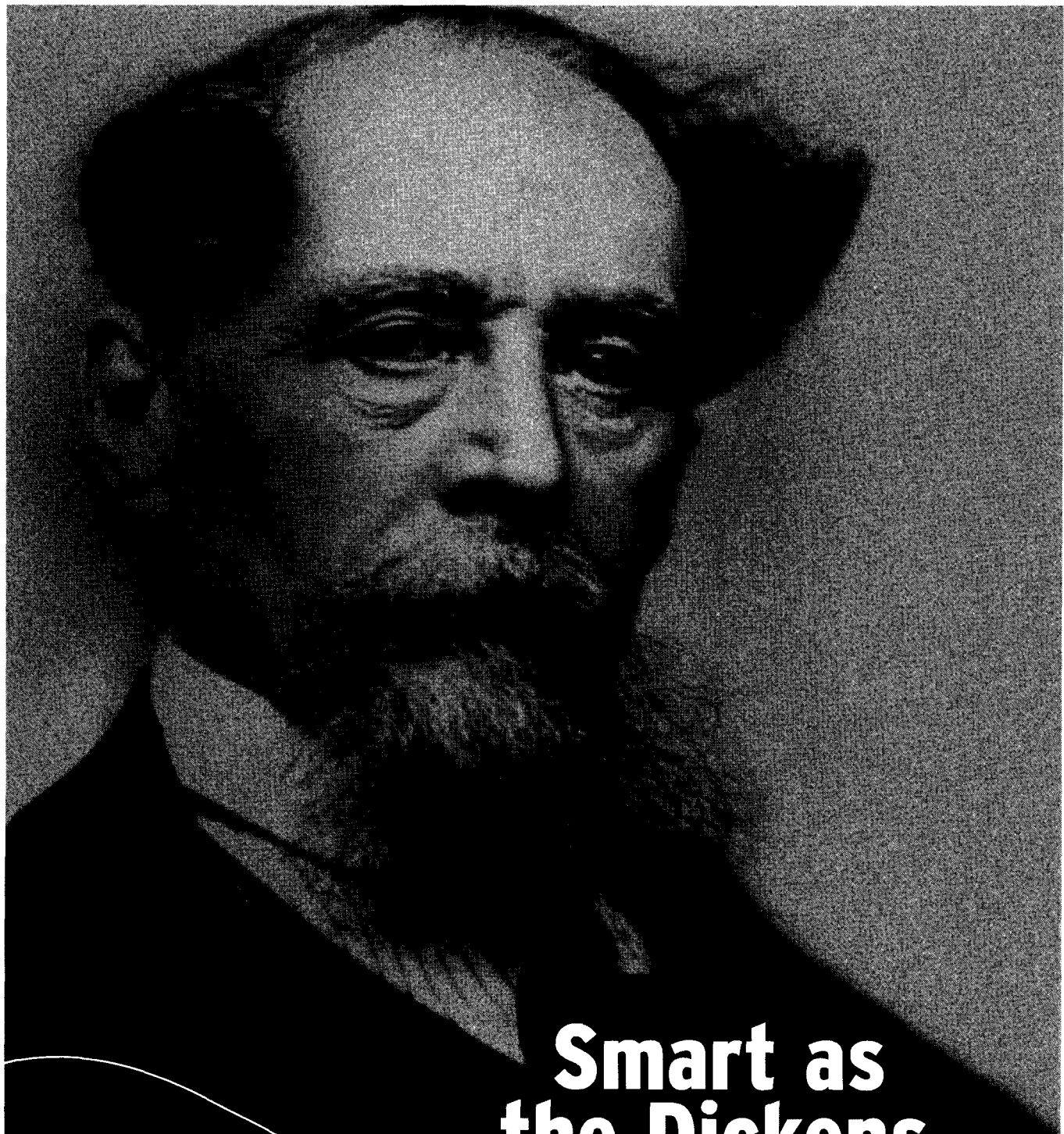
My article's account of American egalitarianism was summary, but it was not exaggerated or untrue, as John Engelman complains. After calling my account "bizarre," he says that "since the recession of 1973 [not a recession year, by the way], real income for the poorest two-thirds of Americans has declined an average of 1 percent a year." That is to say that the incomes of a large majority of Americans have fallen by nearly one-quarter since 1973. Does he really believe this?

Mr. Engelman is repeating a factoid-myth that has been in circulation for many years. Its exact provenance remains a mystery, but it is probably a misinterpretation of one of the government's wage surveys. The likeliest source is a Labor Department survey of "weekly and hourly earnings of production and nonsupervisory workers," which covers about two-thirds of the

workforce (not "of Americans") and which shows annual declines in the 1-percent range for some stretches (though not for the 1973-2000 period).

That survey has been collected in such a way, however, as to include progressively more lower-wage workers over time: it does not track changes in individuals' earnings over time. Moreover, the survey, like most official wage surveys, does not include employee bonuses, profit-sharing, or benefits (the fastest growing form of compensation), or in-kind government transfers (Medicaid, WIC, food stamps) or the Earned Income Tax Credit (which can be substantial for lower-wage workers). Finally, this survey, like most others, uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to adjust for inflation, and all competent economists agree that the CPI has seriously overstated inflation, and thereby seriously understated wage increases, over the past several decades. The Boskin Commission's 1.1-percent CPI correction would itself reverse a 1-percent annual decline in inflation-adjusted wages.

Although Mr. Engelman fell for a statistical whopper, he could easily find good data showing increasing inequality in annual incomes (properly measured and adjusted) in recent decades. But the important point is that annual income is itself a highly misleading measure of the distribution of personal welfare in a society as rich as ours—where we are so wealthy that "annual income" has become, to a significant degree, discretionary. In the early 20th century, most Americans went to work immediately



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after secondary school or earlier and kept working until shortly before they died; today young adults are spending much more time in school (and engaging in other non-earning pursuits), and older people are spending well over a decade on average in retirement. Consider that a man and a woman about to graduate from medical school will typically appear toward the bottom of the income distribution. When they begin work, their incomes are above average, and when they marry, their "household income" doubles. Thirty years later, in their peak earning years, they will probably be in the top 5 percent of the income distribution. Today the bottom and top of the income dis-

tribution in any given year include many people such as these; the word for this form of income inequality is "progress."

An important reflection of these trends can be seen in the work of Daniel Slesnick of the University of Texas, who finds that the distribution of annual consumption has remained essentially unchanged since 1973, even as the distribution of annual income has become less equal. (This includes Mr. Engelman's "poorest two-thirds," whose consumption expenditures have been increasing at about the same rate as the top one-third.) And Slesnick's data do not capture the most important new form of consumption—consumption of leisure (non-

earning) time, which is particularly striking among the "poorest two-thirds" and among those who are in the workforce. New research by MIT economist Dora Costa shows that, in 1950, Americans in the top 10 percent for wage income were working 46 hours a week on average while those in the bottom 10 percent were working 52 hours—and that by 1998 the two groups had traded places, the top 10 percent laboring 52 hours a week while the bottom 10 percent were down to 45 hours. That is a redistribution from the top to the bottom of the wage scale of nearly one day of free time every week, or a month-and-a-half every year! These changes in the allocation of time have important

consequences for income distribution. Robert Haveman of the University of Wisconsin has shown that most of the recent increase in income inequality among male wage earners (at least 63 percent of increased inequality for the period 1973-1988) has been due to voluntary personal choice, not lack of opportunity.

Mr. Engelman is right that economic inequality, beyond a certain point, generates popular demand for some equalization. So he should ask himself why, if inequality has really been growing as much as he supposes in recent decades, redistribution has faded from U.S. politics during this period. The last big redistributive initiative was President Clinton's 1993 proposal to provide health insurance to the dozens of millions of Americans who lack it: the proposal was a spectacular flop, and health care reformers have despaired ever since over the public's indifference to the issue. Now the levelers have turned to the "digital divide," where social justice is to be had through government subsidies for Palm Pilots and Internet connections. Such is the equality politics of a super-rich, super-egalitarian society.

Every important statement in Donald Feldstein's letter is wrong. Magazines were not filled with warnings that Social Security would be bankrupt soon, but rather that it would be bankrupt in 30 or 40 years; the current surpluses in the government's general account have not altered those projections; Social Security has not faded but is one of the central issues in this year's presidential campaign. President Clinton has not made saving

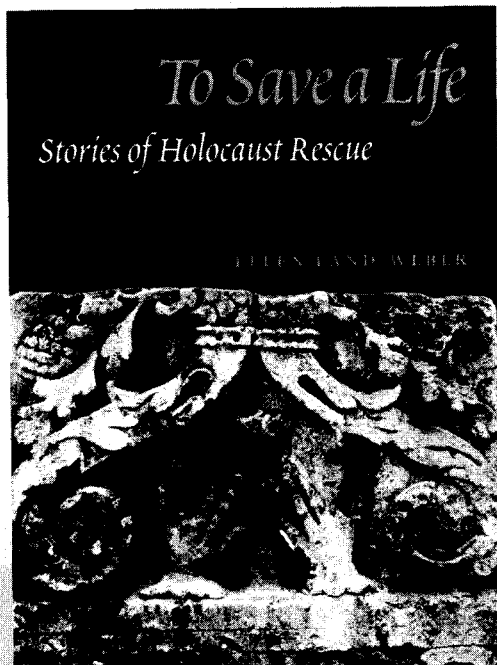
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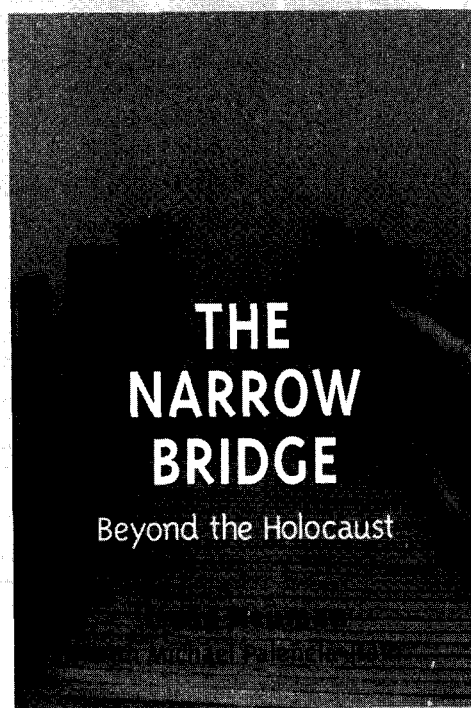


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Social Security a top priority; he offered one reform proposal with some interesting features, and submitted budgets that claimed to "protect" Social Security through entirely meaningless, indeed ridiculous, slights of accounting, but his eight years in office have produced little of substance in the area despite the pleas of prominent Democratic legislators like Daniel P. Moynihan and Bob Kerrey. (The one important Social Security reform of his term, the recent elimination of the earnings limit for people over 65, was a longtime Republican proposal.) The Gingrich revolution was not "destroyed"—its 1994 majority of the House of Representatives remains intact, although diminished in size—and Speaker Gingrich's setbacks at the hands of President Clinton, such as during the government shutdown in the fall of 1995, had nothing whatever to do with Social Security.

I am sorry that Mr. Feldstein imagines himself, as a low-income worker, becoming an "embittered bigot" because poorer neighbors are receiving means-tested welfare benefits. And I am sorry that he thinks the only way to achieve unity in America is through universal government programs. If he were to look closely at Social Security, he would see that it has many features that are disuniting and embittering and distributionally perverse to boot—such as its treatment of working women and widows in many circumstances—features that would be cured if the program were means-tested or, better yet, privatized and vested.

I agree with Michael W. Schwartz and Frederic Wile that the courts and Congress are responsible for

much bad policy and willy-nilly government growth. Both writers offer several choice examples and emphasize congressional pusillanimity—which, I think they would agree, is an institutional problem rather than one of party or persons. That, in my view, is why the executive agencies should be regarded as the "most dangerous branch," and why the President is the only likely source of constitutional reinvigoration. The specialized executive agencies, with the "experts, technicians, systems analysts, bureaucrats, and special pleaders of all kinds" that Joseph C. Doherty describes, are the activist forces of modern government. The Congress is essentially two large unwieldy committees, subdivided into hundreds of smaller overlapping committees and rent by innumerable factions of interest and ideology; the judiciary is constrained by self-denying doctrines of precedent and jurisdiction and, above all, by the inability to set its own agenda.

In contrast, the executive agencies are purposive, protean, persistent: able to seize and promote with alacrity every opportunity created by vague legislation and judicial innovation (the Civil Rights Act mentioned by Mr. Wile, and the rules concerning class actions, punitive damages, and attorneys' fees mentioned by Mr. Schwartz, being conspicuous examples). But the parchment still says the agencies work for the President. The situation will improve when—and, I think, only when—a President reverses course, and obliges his hundreds of thousands of energetic, well-organized subordinates to follow.

Jörg Haider

TO THE EDITOR:

I have great respect and admiration for Robert S. Wistrich as a historian and scholar. It is therefore with some surprise that I find myself in disagreement with his article on Jörg Haider ["Haider and His Critics," April].

Mr. Wistrich correctly observes that the international outcry accompanying the entry of Haider's Freedom party into an Austrian governing coalition in February was "unexpectedly swift" and "severe." But even though he acknowledges that the Austrian demagogue represents a real threat, for some reason Mr. Wistrich has reserved his most critical comments for Haider's accusers. There may be no shortage of hypocrisy among the European Union (EU) member states who have reacted by downgrading bilateral relations with Austria, but that is no reason to criticize them for taking a stand now.

Mr. Wistrich's own writings (including a booklet called "Austria and the Legacy of the Holocaust," published by the American Jewish Committee) demonstrate that he is well aware of Austria's reluctance to come to terms with its past. Until recently, Austrian leaders gladly accepted the mantle of Hitler's first victim even as they avoided paying compensation to Jewish victims and vied for the political support of former Nazis. This was the environment in which Haider—himself the child of enthusiastic Nazi-party members—grew up, so his political views and controversial statements should come as no surprise. As Mr. Wistrich himself reminds his readers, Haider "has been

unable to hide his distaste for any honest appraisal of the Nazi past." If European Union leaders are to remain silent when someone like Jörg Haider comes to power, then under what conditions should they speak?

Mr. Wistrich complains that "none of [Haider's] acts of contrition has been accepted, or reciprocated, by [his] critics in Austria and in Europe." Why should they be, when he so clearly demonstrates his insincerity? Should they applaud his acknowledgment of the validity of property claims by Jewish Holocaust victims when he immediately links such claims to those of Sudeten Germans? Should they now accept Haider's half-hearted apology for having praised the employment policies of the Third Reich, when on previous occasions he has repeatedly and vigorously defended his choice of words?

Mr. Wistrich reports that Haider has taken no office in the new national government, but has chosen instead to remain in his post as governor of Carinthia, and even resigned as chairman of the Freedom party in response to international pressure. But few people seriously imagine this party is anything but an extension of Haider himself. If one looks at its ministers in the new cabinet, the common denominator and seemingly only qualification is a fierce loyalty to the now "former" chairman. And even if they are imagined to be independent actors, they are guilty of the same offensive rhetoric and behavior that got Haider himself into trouble, including such things as calling concentration camps "punishment camps," supporting Holo-

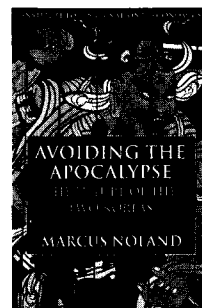
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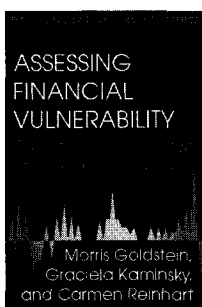
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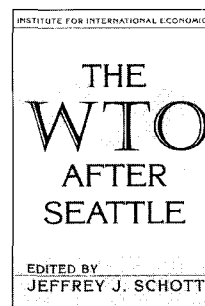


The WTO after Seattle

Jeffrey J. Schott, editor

The failure of the Seattle trade ministerial in December 1999 to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations dealt a major blow to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this volume, leading trade experts analyze the problems and challenges facing the trading system in the aftermath of the Seattle ministerial. They examine why it is in the interests of both developed and developing countries to reengage in new trade talks, and how such talks could promote world trade and economic development, reform WTO operations, and strengthen public support for the trading system. The volume presents balanced perspectives on world trade problems by authors from the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, with recommendations on what needs to be done in key areas to launch new talks.

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caust-denial publications, and charging that foreigners were receiving hormone shots from the government in order to increase their birth rate. With or without Haider—and no one really doubts his ambition to be Austrian chancellor someday—the Freedom party is a dangerous and ugly coalition partner.

On several occasions, Mr. Wistrich trumpets the new government as “the choice of the Austrian people.” But the matter is not so simple. In the elections of last October, the Freedom party received only 27 percent of the vote, barely edging out the conservative People’s party for second place and finishing well behind the first-place Social Democrats. Austrian voters were clearly divided. The real “choice” was made not by them but by Wolfgang Schüssel, the leader of the People’s party, when he decided to break a long-standing taboo and form a government with Haider.

In reality, the “sanctions” adopted by the other fourteen European Union states also have more to do with Chancellor Schüssel and his ministers than with the Austrian people as a whole. Far from “nakedly bullying tactics,” as Mr. Wistrich calls them, those sanctions are more the stuff of canceling state visits, snubbing ambassadors, and avoiding handshakes and group photographs—offenses to diplomats and ministers, it is hoped, but hardly a punishing ordeal for the average Austrian citizen. In fact, a good many Austrians welcomed these sanctions as a legitimate expression of European values, as demonstrated by the 200,000 people who gathered on Feb-

ruary 19 in the Heldenplatz in Vienna, to protest their new government.

One might expect Mr. Wistrich to applaud this popular reaction as reflecting a new maturity among Austrians and a mindfulness of their country’s history. (Remember that no Austrians demonstrated when Kurt Waldheim was elected president.) Instead, he inexplicably unleashes his wrath on these demonstrators, calling their actions “the mindless sloganeering of an infantile Left that is eternally replaying the Spanish civil war or other mythic scenarios of ‘antifascist’ resistance.”

In the end, Robert Wistrich’s contempt for European hypocrisy and his belief in the “vacuum of values in contemporary Europe” seem to have overshadowed his common sense. These nations may have been silent in the past when confronted with arguably similar situations; they are not so now. A real demonstration of a vacuum of values would have been for them to continue a policy of business as usual with Austria, whose government now includes a party that espouses openly racist and xenophobic views and only slightly veiled anti-Semitic ones.

[RABBI] ANDREW BAKER
*Director of European Affairs
American Jewish Committee
Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITOR:

Though Robert S. Wistrich’s review of the goings-on in Austria is solid, the conclusions he offers are not. He argues that the sanctions against Austria are a mistake, while his own solution is to give the Austrian people “ample opportunity to reconsider.”

It is true that Haider’s popularity has already dipped, but what if Mr. Wistrich’s hope—that a disenchanted electorate will eventually vote the Freedom party out of office—fails? What if, in five years’ time, Austrians feel vindicated by the policies of radical right-wing parties that have become mainstream in Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, France, and Germany?

MARC SALZBERGER
Middle Village, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Robert S. Wistrich for one of the best American pieces on European affairs that I have seen for a while. He has skewered the moral hollowness of the case made in Brussels against Jörg Haider, while making the important point that the EU’s stupid, hypocritical, and ill-considered action against Austria will be counterproductive.

It might be worthwhile to add a point that he does not stress but that is central to the messy European situation. The quasi-dictatorship of the EU is itself riddled with corruption. Popular resentment of the increasingly pettifogging and destructive diktats coming out of Brussels has been strengthened by the disastrous performance of the euro. And the Schengen agreement, abolishing many frontier controls on the Continent, has proved a massive blessing for both illegal immigration and illegal drug trafficking.

These problems are now seriously undermining the attempt to create a federal Europe, and they have fueled much xenophobic sentiment as well. Even in Britain, where I live, the

New Labor government of Tony Blair is not immune to these effects. Asylum-seekers, legitimate or not, are finding life more difficult, and visitors from the Indian subcontinent can be required to post a £10,000 bond as surety of their economic viability and intention to return home. Even Haider has not demanded anything like that.

As Mr. Wistrich says, the climate today in Europe is not like that of the 30’s. But there is a pervasive sense of instability on the Continent that has been exacerbated by various EU crises and a fear of what appears to many to be an uncontrolled tide of “foreign invaders.” This new public sentiment needs to be taken seriously and addressed—not rejected out of hand as “neofascist.”

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

ROBERT S. WISTRICH
writes:

Nothing that has happened in Austria since the publication of my article has led me to revise my view of the European Union’s ill-judged and hasty actions in imposing sanctions on that country. The crisis of the EU has in fact deepened—Herb Greer, in his well-informed letter, points to some of the more recent symptoms—and, contrary to the dire predictions of its adversaries, the present Austrian government has done nothing thus far to justify the quarantine into which the country has been placed. Cracks are appearing in the EU consensus about the wisdom of its intransigent policy, though, under the upcoming French presidency of the Union, nothing much is likely to change in this regard.

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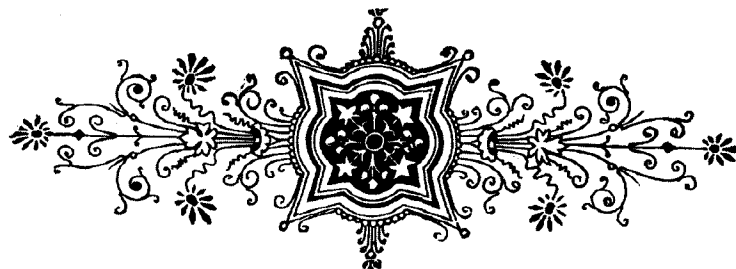
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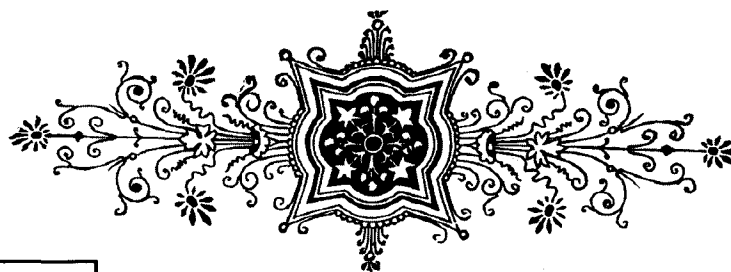
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The Austrians, meanwhile, are proceeding with their promised compensation of the victims of Nazi slave labor, notwithstanding the presence of the Freedom party in the ruling coalition. Austria's policy with regard to immigrants is, if anything, more liberal than that of most of the other European Union member-states. There has been no anti-Semitic backlash even remotely comparable to the time of the Waldheim affair.

In light of these facts, Andrew Baker's concerns, while they may be understandable, strike me as misplaced, curiously parochial, and lacking a sense of political reality. Ignoring the examples I gave in my article of contemporary Europe's constitutive racism (and there are many more such examples), he remains fixated on Austria as if it were unique and existed in some kind of sociopolitical vacuum. He takes the EU's reaction at face value as if it really stemmed from a concern for universalist values, a naïve view to say the least. Failing to address the concrete reasons I gave for the rapid rise of Haider's party, he instead reiterates points about Austria's Nazi past that are not only well known but were clearly spelled out in my introductory remarks. He even demagogically implies that I expect the EU to accept unquestioningly Haider's half-apologies, when I wrote precisely the opposite.

In my view, Rabbi Baker is also far too hasty in assuming that all the Freedom-party ministers are or will remain Haider loyalists; equally, it is a simplistic generalization to imply that they are all racists and xenophobes from the same sta-

ble. The present finance minister, for one, does not answer to either of these descriptions.

Contrary to Rabbi Baker's statement, I did not "trumpet" the new government as the choice of the Austrian people. Those are his words, not mine, and they are quite misleading. The fact is, however, that the present government holds 104 out of 183 seats in the Austrian parliament, after an impeccably democratic election. If that is not a sufficient mandate, then Rabbi Baker and I have very different notions of the meaning of democracy. As for Chancellor Schüssel's decision to form a coalition with Haider's party, Rabbi Baker neglects to mention that Schüssel negotiated for months with the socialists, who were determined to cling to power on their own terms, and he turned to the Freedom party only after those negotiations failed.

Rabbi Baker reproaches me for being unenthusiastic about the demonstrations in Vienna against the present government. Let me be clear: I have nothing against democratic protests. Among those protesting, as it happens, were people I count as personal friends and whom I greatly respect. Not one of them has told me that he finds the EU sanctions helpful to his cause.

In answer to Marc Salzberger, I cannot of course predict the future any more than he can. But I do believe that a spell in government for the Freedom party is no bad thing for Austria's democracy. It will not endanger the liberal order (which is solid); it will expose many of the contradictions in the party's pro-

gram and its lack of positive solutions for Austria's problems; it will give the socialists a chance to free themselves from the corrupting effect of 30 years in office and to modernize their outdated ideology; and it will accelerate long-overdue changes in Austrian social attitudes and political consciousness, on both the Right and Left. It will also offer Europe a chance to redefine itself in a deeper way than by seizing on a symptom of its own malaise and scapegoating a single country. In that sense, Haider, a thoroughly mischievous and unscrupulous demagogue, may turn out to have provided a very useful wake-up call for Europe, if not beyond.

Cuba

TO THE EDITOR:

Mark Falcoff dodges both his own question—how to deal with Cuba—and any examination of the premise of our current policy toward Cuba—that America's interest lies in attempting to isolate Cuba from the world ["Elián, Take Me With You," April].

This premise has led to our embargo on trade, travel, and investment, as well as to a grab-bag of smaller measures like limits on Cuban-Americans' family visits and remittances, an exhortation in U.S. law for a UN-enforced ban on all nations' trade with Cuba, and the barring from U.S. ports for six months of any ship that calls on Cuba.

These unusual policies may not explain the longevity of Cuban Communism, but they have done nothing

visibly to weaken it, even after Presidents Bush and Clinton tightened the embargo in 1992 and 1996. Cuban dissident leader Elizardo Sánchez rightly calls the embargo "an odd way to demonstrate support for human rights."

The embargo is also at odds with the assumption that guided U.S. policy toward Soviet-bloc countries: that trade, travel, and normal human contact were valuable ways to spread American ideas. Unrestricted travel would create countless new contacts between Americans and Cubans. The dollars Americans spend would expand the ranks of Cuba's small entrepreneurial sector. Opening agricultural trade would reduce Cuba's import costs, increase the country's food supplies, and stop sending the signal that the U.S. intends to use "hunger and want to pressure civic society to revolt," as Cuba's Catholic bishops wrote in a pastoral letter.

Allowing investment in one sector, such as food and agriculture, would let American companies join the other foreign businesses that are now paying the best wages in Cuba and exposing the Cuban people to capitalism. Building on our migration accord with Cuba, U.S. officials could also look for ways to increase cooperation in areas such as drug enforcement or environmental protection.

These modest measures would not bring Communism in Cuba to a precipitous end. They must be accompanied by sustained, or even strengthened, human-rights advocacy. But these measures would usefully defy our tendency to elevate Fidel Castro by plac-



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PHILIP PETERS
*Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia*

TO THE EDITOR:
Mark Falcoff makes sev-

eral factual errors in his article on Elián González. The fishermen who rescued him did in fact turn him over to the U.S. Coast Guard at sea. It was the Coast Guard—not the fishermen—that rightly decided to bring Elián to shore for medical treatment.

Mr. Falcoff also states that the Cuban Adjustment Act "grants automatic political asylum to any Cuban who manages to make it to the United States." This is not accurate; the act adjusts the status of Cubans who are paroled into the U.S. to permanent resident alien status within one year of the parole date. Most, but not all, Cubans are, as a matter of course, paroled into the U.S. upon arrival. Seeking political asylum is a separate

process; relatively few Cubans who are paroled into the U.S. are ever granted that status.

RANDY BEARDSWORTH
*Center for Strategic and
International Studies
Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITOR:

Mark Falcoff's article is the best I have seen on the subject. Quite beyond the contradictions and conflicts in the legal realm that Mr. Falcoff describes, there is the extraordinary moral drama that was played out in Miami, where it was almost as if the hopes and aspirations of the entire Cuban-American community were carried in the body of a six-year-old boy.

But Elián's situation is also, as Mr. Falcoff says, a

singular, dramatic illustration of the larger political questions in American-Cuban relations. When we examine the forces arguing for his shipment back to Cuba, those of us for whom matters of conscience and principle remain central must decry the sham victory of a Department of Justice that has sought to turn this matter into a routine, administrative event. The expected return of Elián to Cuba will have terrible ramifications for an already feeble foreign policy.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
*Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey*

MARK FALCOFF writes:

The purpose of my article was not, in fact, to make any particular recommendation about America's policy toward Cuba, present or future, but merely to underscore the fact that because Cuba has a particular form of government and economy—widely known as Communism—people like Elián González's mother will continue to take to flimsy boats and risk (and in many cases forfeit) their lives in an attempt to escape. This point, so essential to understanding the entire Elián affair, seems to have been lost, possibly intentionally, by Castro's sympathizers in the American media and political and religious communities.

To be sure, nowadays to oppose U.S. policy toward Cuba is not necessarily a sign of sympathy—overt or covert—for the Castro regime. I thought I made this point clear. Quite the contrary: many American business concerns could not care less about the form of government Cuba has, and foreign-policy experts like Philip Peters firmly believe



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Arabian Fables (I)

How the Arabs soften up world opinion with fanciful myths.

Josef Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister of the Nazis, had it right. Just tell people big lies often enough and they will believe them. The Arabs have learned that lesson well. They have swayed world opinion by endlessly repeating myths and lies that have no basis in fact.

What are some of these myths?

The "Palestinians". That is the fundamental myth. The concept of "Palestinians" is one that did not exist until about 1948, when the Arab inhabitants, of what until then was Palestine, wished to differentiate themselves from the Jews. Until then, the Jews were the Palestinians. There was the Palestinian Brigade of Jewish volunteers in the British World War II

Army (at a time when the Palestinian Arabs were in Berlin hatching plans with Adolf Hitler for world conquest and how to kill all the Jews); there was the Palestinian

Symphony Orchestra (all Jews, of course); there was *The Palestine Post*; and so much more. The Arabs who now call themselves "Palestinians" do so in order to persuade a misinformed world that they are a distinct nationality and that "Palestine" is their ancestral homeland. But they are no distinct nationality at all. They are the same — in language, custom, and tribal and family ties — as the Arabs of Syria, Jordan, and beyond. There is no more difference between the "Palestinians" and the other Arabs of those countries than there is between, say, the citizens of Minnesota and those of Wisconsin.

What's more, many of the "Palestinians", or their immediate ancestors, came to the area attracted by the prosperity created by the Jews, in what previously had been pretty much of a wasteland.

The nationhood of the "Palestinians" is a myth.

The "West Bank". Again, this is a concept that did not exist until 1948, when the army of the Kingdom of Transjordan, together with five other Arab armies, invaded the Jewish state of Israel, on the very day of its creation.

In what can almost be described as a Biblical miracle, the ragtag Jewish forces defeated the combined Arab might. But Transjordan stayed in possession of Judea and Samaria and the eastern

part of Jerusalem. The Jordanians expelled all the Jews from the area that they occupied, destroyed all Jewish houses of worship, and renamed as "West Bank" the territories that had been Judea and Samaria since time immemorial.

The attempt, quite successful, was to persuade an uninformed world that these territories were ancestral

"The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!"

parts of the Jordanian Arab Kingdom (itself a very recent creation of British power diplomacy).

Even after the total rout of the Arabs in the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the Jordanians were driven out of

Judea/Samaria and of Jerusalem, they and the world continued to call this territory the "West Bank", a geographical and political concept that cannot be found on any except the most recent maps.

The concept of the "West Bank" is a myth.

The "Occupied Territories". After the victorious Six-Day War, during which the Israeli army defeated the same cabal of Arabs that had invaded the country in 1948, Israel regained possession of Judea/Samaria, which the Jordanians had illegally occupied for 19 years; of the Gaza Strip, which had been occupied by the Egyptians, but which had never been part of their country; and of the Golan Heights, a plateau the size of Queens, which, though originally part of Palestine, had been assigned to Syria by British-French agreement.

The last sovereign in Judea/Samaria and in Gaza was the British mandatory power — and before it was the Ottoman Empire. All of Palestine, including what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, was, by the Balfour Declaration, destined to be the Jewish National Home. How then could the Israelis possibly be "occupiers" in their own territory? Who would be the sovereign and who the rightful inhabitants?

The concept of "occupied territories" in reference to Judea/Samaria and Gaza is an Arab propaganda myth.

Unable so far to destroy Israel on the battlefield — though they are feverishly preparing for their next assault — the Arabs are now trying to overcome and destroy Israel by their acknowledged "policy of stages". That policy is to get as much land as possible carved out of Israel "by peaceful and diplomatic" means, so as to make Israel indefensible and softened up for the final assault. The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!

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that the U.S. economic embargo is politically counter-productive. Perhaps it is; but that does not mean that lifting it will necessarily do anything other than provide the regime with a new legitimacy and fresh resources. To state it another way, if one policy does not produce the desired result, its opposite may not, either.

I presume (but, unfortunately, cannot be absolutely certain) that lifting the embargo would position the United States somewhat more advantageously with respect to the international community on the Cuban issue, and possibly also weaken the regime from an ideological point of view vis-à-vis its own people—but again, I cannot be certain. Even if we choose to sell our agricultural products to Cuba, the island may not have the hard currency with which to buy them; we need not wonder to whom will Castro attribute *that* misfortune.

I do agree with Mr. Peters that many provisions of the Helms-Burton law and other restrictions are probably exaggerated and needlessly alienate Cubans who are otherwise opposed to their country's government. On the other hand, not *all* dissidents agree with Elizardo Sánchez on the U.S. embargo, just as not all human-rights activists in South Africa were of one mind on the same subject.

As for Randy Beardsworth's clarifications: I perhaps too carelessly summarized the gravamen of the Cuban Adjustment Act. But I was not far off-base in describing its effects. True, this law does not grant *automatic* political asylum to any Cuban who manages to make it to the

United States, but it does facilitate the granting of permanent residency to new arrivals after they have passed one year's probation. I feel certain that the vast majority of Cubans who have settled in this country in the last two decades have done so under this act.

I do, however, stand corrected on the detail of who rescued Elián and brought him to the United States. Apparently the major error in not returning the child immediately to Cuba—which is, as I explained in the article, our current policy—was made by the Immigration and Naturalization Services.

I appreciate very much the comments of Irving Louis Horowitz, who has clearly understood what I was trying to say in my article.

Jews & Conservatives

TO THE EDITOR:

While it may be fashionable in some segments of the Jewish community to suggest a conservative shift in the political views of Jews, as Murray Friedman does in "Are American Jews Moving to the Right?" [April], the hard data of public-opinion polls and election exit polls prove that any such assertion is false.

The oft-cited Los Angeles and New York mayoral contests are poor measures. Municipal elections are not ideological, and in Los Angeles they are even nonpartisan. In the 1993 Los Angeles election, Jews voted according to their location, with those in the San Fernando Valley (about half of the Los Angeles Jewish population) going for the Re-

publican Richard J. Riordan and those on the west side going against him. In the 1997 election, Riordan did not face any serious opposition.

In 1998, the *Los Angeles Times* conducted a national poll in which 46 percent of Jews identified themselves as liberals, 28 percent as moderates, and 23 percent as conservatives. In the same sample, only 12 percent identified themselves as Republicans. Exit polls from the California primary this past March revealed that Jews voted against the proposition to ban gay marriages by 76 percent—the highest margin of any ethnic group.

Mr. Friedman also cites examples of Jewish institutional movement toward the Right, but this is evidence only of the disconnection between the "country-club"

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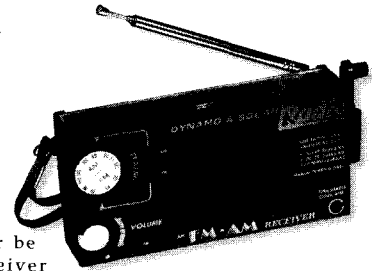
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class that runs Jewish organizations and the larger community that this class is supposed to represent.

HOWARD WELINSKY
Culver City, California

TO THE EDITOR:

My own view of American Jews coincides with Murray Friedman's, and I would amplify only one point in his excellent article. Jews, he writes, are turned off "by such gestures as Governor Bush's having named Jesus as his favorite philosopher," but Vice President Al Gore has similarly asserted that, when making important decisions, he always asks himself, "What Would Jesus Do?" Perhaps Jews should be even more concerned with Gore's comment; favoring Jesus as a philosopher, as Buch does, seems less emphatic than using him as a guide in the political arena.

NATHAN DODELL
Rockville, Maryland

MURRAY FRIEDMAN writes:

There is much that I agree with in Howard Welinsky's letter, but I think my central thesis—that Jews are becoming more conservative—remains correct. The reason this is more visible at the local level than nationally is that the problems responsible for the shift, like crime and public disorder, are by and large dealt with locally. What distinguishes the new, Jewish conservatives from more right-wing types is that they continue to support a number of tra-

ditional liberal positions, as Mr. Welinsky correctly notes.

I appreciate Nathan Dodel's kind remarks. Perhaps more important than the fact that both Governor Bush and Vice President Gore view Jesus as their guide is that those who permit some form of traditional religion to enter their lives—whether Christian, Jewish, or some other faith—tend to be more conservative politically.

Theology

TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to what David Singer argues in his review of *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* [April], Louis Jacobs's exposition of Jewish theology for our times is unparalleled. That Jacobs had the courage to be instructed by his knowledge of modernity is to his credit and, it seems to me, in the spirit of the classical sage, Maimonides.

Maimonides outlined different levels of *tzedaka* (righteousness or charity), whereby one could practice a little, much, or a great deal, but all were still considered *tzedaka*. So too should there be levels of Jewish religious observance.

There have always been many traditions of practice, as any survey of Jewish literature and history can confirm. Fortunately for all Jews, none can declare a *herem* (excommunication) against others, though some try. It is destructive to deny

any Jew the *mitzvah* of whatever level of personal observance he can achieve.

HOWARD E. BRAUN
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

I found David Singer's critique very interesting. Louis Jacobs, who reflects the thinking of what in the United States is Conservative Judaism, theorizes that a Jew is obligated to fulfill certain commandments not because they were given by God at Sinai but because of the historical experience of the Jewish people.

Mr. Singer argues correctly that if the commandments are not regarded as coming directly from God, then they lose their binding force. To put it another way, if human beings brought the commandments into being, the observant Jew of today is free to set them aside.

The current state of Conservative Judaism proves the rightness of Mr. Singer's remarks. Recent studies have shown that only about 10 percent of Conservative Jews observe the laws of *kasbrut* and only a few more bother to light candles on Friday nights. At the New York City Board of Education, where I used to work, the only teachers and supervisors who ate at the designated kosher tables were the Orthodox members of the staff. More telling still is the recent study by Richard Horowitz and Antony Gordon (based on a 1991 Jewish population survey), which reveals little differ-

ence in the intermarriage rate between Conservative and Reform Jews. Both groups are destined for oblivion in about 40 years. Only Orthodoxy can guarantee Jewish survival.

ABRAHAM FRANK
Brooklyn, New York

DAVID SINGER writes:

Howard E. Braun does Louis Jacobs an injustice by suggesting that the latter's aim is to validate "many traditions of practice." On the contrary, Jacobs stresses the binding nature of *halakhah* as defined in the Talmud and codes of Jewish law. The difficulty is that Jacobs wishes to establish *halakhic* commitment on nonfundamentalist theological foundations—a very tall order indeed. Were Jacobs to succeed in this enterprise, I would be thrilled, but in *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* he clearly falls short of the mark.

Abraham Frank points to disturbing trends but takes too much pleasure in reporting them. Since the vast majority of non-Orthodox Jews have no intention of becoming Orthodox, theological efforts along the lines of Louis Jacobs's become all the more important.

Correction

In the letter by Rabbi Eugene J. Cohen (June, p. 6) regarding the use of lidocaine in circumcision, the phrase "following the procedure" should have read "before the procedure." We regret the error.—Ed.



Di khaliastre (The Gang), Jewish writers in Warsaw, 1922. Photo courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

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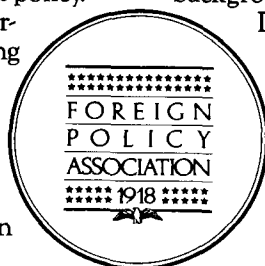
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In Asian America

Tamar Jacoby

ONE COULD not have asked for more perfect, southern-California weather. Asian-American organizers were expecting a big turnout for their rally at the Los Angeles campus of California State University, a cluster of glass-and-concrete towers flanked by parking lots that lies only minutes from the suburbs of Alhambra and Monterey Park, where the bulk of the population is now Chinese-American. In the months since the arrest of Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos scientist suspected of espionage, ethnic activists had seized on his case as a turning point in the political awakening of Asian America. According to them, the middle-class professionals in enclaves like Alhambra and Monterey Park were precisely the people who were most concerned about the case and feeling the most vulnerable: if a quiet, hard-working naturalized citizen like the Taiwan-born Lee could be scapegoated, then no Asian-Americans, no matter how successful, were safe.

In the event, perhaps 30 participants turned out for the Cal State rally. Most were plainly students, many of them black or Latino. No more than three or four Chinese-American adults showed up from Alhambra and Monterey Park, and few of the Asian-American students who wandered by so much as paused to listen to the angry speeches and rap

monologues written for the occasion. When asked, several young people drinking coffee on the terrace of the nearby student center said they had never heard of Wen Ho Lee.

The disparity between what the organizers had expected and what actually happened could hardly have been more vivid, and the questions this raised hung wordlessly in the brilliant sunshine.

THE 35 years since passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act have transformed the Asian-American community beyond recognition. Its numbers have multiplied by a factor of ten, raising the total to roughly 4 percent of U.S. residents, and, on almost every indicator, the newcomers differ significantly from Asian immigrants of an earlier era. Largely though not entirely middle-class, many come prepared with ample skills and education to succeed economically in the new world, and most have rapidly done so.

More than half of this population lives on the west coast, and its presence there is transforming both cities and suburbs. Large tracts of Orange County and the San Gabriel Valley, just east of Los Angeles, are now dominated by Asian residents; at the heart of the new economy, in Silicon Valley, they account for one-quarter of the engineers and fully a third of the entrepreneurs. But the east coast, too—large sections of Queens in New York City, northern and central New Jersey, the Virginia and Maryland suburbs of Washington D.C., among

TAMAR JACOBY, a senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute, is the author of *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration*.

other places—is now feeling the influx, as are a number of inland areas like Texas.

The new Asian-American community is hardly monolithic; indeed, its sheer variety confounds generalization of almost any kind. Where once the bulk of the population was ethnically Chinese and Japanese, today it hails from all over Asia. As of 1997, Chinese-Americans, still the largest group, accounted for less than a quarter of the total, while Filipinos were a close second, and Indians, Vietnamese, and Koreans all outnumbered Japanese-Americans. Others, relatively few in number but culturally distinct, are Laotian, Cambodian, Thai, and Hmong.

Still other differences within the Asian community are socioeconomic and political in nature. When the group is taken together, its median household income exceeds that of whites. (Among married couples, the Asian figure tops \$49,000, while the white number comes in under \$45,000). The fraction that has completed college, 41 percent in 1994, is nearly double that of the general population. But the more successful nationalities differ markedly from those at or near the bottom: among Indians, nearly 60 percent have finished college, as against only 5 percent of the Hmong, and the two groups' professional attainment, income, and rate of acculturation vary accordingly. On top of this, there is significant variation even within national groups. The earliest wave of Vietnamese immigrants, for example, the middle-class professionals who came at the end of the war, still score differently on all socioeconomic indices than the "boat people" who arrived in later decades.

Among the nationalities, Koreans are by far the most entrepreneurial; in Los Angeles, more than one-third of them are self-employed. But the Chinese tend to start bigger and more sophisticated businesses: import-export concerns and technical manufacturing rather than neighborhood groceries. Indian-American doctors are spreading through the 50 states, and many Filipinos, too, gravitate to health care: 16 percent of the nurses and 18 percent of the lab technicians in the Los Angeles area are Filipino. Southeast Asians generally vote Republican; Japanese lean heavily Democratic. And so forth.

Yet despite their diversity, Asian-Americans are often perceived as a single group, not only by other Americans but in their own minds as well; and as the distance grows between them and their countries of origin, the distinctions may fade even further. Today, what unites them is their newness to this country. An astonishing 60 to 70 percent are

foreign-born, and as many as 30 percent, even among the most successful groups, report that they speak English poorly. Most came to the United States as young adults, and only now are raising their own children to adulthood.

It is the members of this burgeoning second generation who, far more than their parents, will set the pattern for the Asian-American experience. As with every immigrant group before them, they are facing the challenge of somehow fitting in—of juggling their heritage and their identity with participation in the mainstream. The big difference is that they are doing this in an atmosphere of unprecedented affluence and in a society besieged by the ideology of "diversity." For the first time in history, it would appear, a large immigrant group can actually decide if and how it is going to assimilate. The choices these particular newcomers make, and the way they make those choices, will thus prove of the utmost significance both for them and for the rest of us.

THERE ARE two self-imposed obstacles in the path to assimilation, the first of them ideological and political. In the eyes of Asian-American activists like those who organized the Cal State rally, both they and their countrymen are quintessentially "people of color." Indeed, the very term "Asian-American" traces back to the 1960's, when it was coined, in the spirit of "Black Power" and "Chicano studies," as a kind of battle cry.

From the beginning, Asian-American partisans have focused on the history of their people's persecution in the United States. It is a long, bitter saga that starts with the harassment of the first Chinese who came to join the Gold Rush and build the transcontinental railroad, takes in persistent hatred by American workers and official persecution on a par with almost anything in the Jim Crow era, and climaxes with the World War II-era internment of tens of thousands of innocent Japanese suspected of dual loyalty. But today's activists do not stop with the past. Like other ethnic advocates, they are convinced that their constituents still face a wall of prejudice and that the only appropriate response is an angry, oppositional, "minority" attitude.

In recent decades, ethnocentric professional associations, legal defense funds, ad-hoc protest committees, and community groups have emerged in every city and state with a significant Asian presence. In universities, Asian-American studies departments have mushroomed, doubling in number in the last ten years alone, often in response to 60's-style student demonstrations. A wide range of publications—from scholarly journals to glossy youth-

oriented monthlies—make the case in different voices. And a bumper crop of Asian-interest web sites is daily adding new outlets, some in English and some, as their purveyors say, “in-language.”

A recent issue of *A.* magazine lays out the familiar catechism. In between features on Asian-American fashion designers, the hottest Mandopop (as in Mandarin) CD's, and a page of Chinese horoscopes, a headline screams “Alien Americans.” Under it, four young writers dolefully explore what it is like to be a “permanent foreigner,” ruminating on everything from the threat posed by white supremacists to the experience of being complimented on one's English and then asked condescendingly, “Where do you come from?” The subtext is plain enough: Asian-American equals minority equals victim, persecuted by an inherently and irreparably racist America.

Acting assistant U.S. attorney general Bill Lann Lee echoed these views not long ago in a speech on the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, in which he asserted that he never would have gotten where he is without racial preferences. Helen Zia, a journalist and self-described “political activist,” goes further still in her recent, widely reviewed book, *Asian-American Dreams*. Chronicling some nine or ten episodes of persecution—the 1982 murder of Detroit auto worker Vincent Chin, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, boycotts against Korean groceries, etc.—Zia not only urges her readers to experiment with more “dramatic” protest tactics but welcomes “the emergence of Asian-American leaders who could stir up passions in the manner of the Rev. Al Sharpton.”

For these activists and others like them, the Wen Ho Lee case has proved a bonanza, as has the 1996 campaign-finance scandal over donations to the Democratic party: proof positive of the bigotry that stalks Asian-Americans. As it happens, both situations are shadowed with ambiguity. The campaign-finance scandal has exposed legal wrongdoing, but also cast suspicion on scores of innocent Asian donors; in the Wen Ho Lee case, with most of the information highly classified, there can be no serious assessment yet of guilt or innocence. But the outpouring of hurt and anger surrounding the two cases has been astonishing.

Together, they have prompted hundreds of rallies, demonstrations, panel discussions, and campus teach-ins. Warning young Asians that they will never be welcome in the United States, militants make a direct connection between the Lee case and the Japanese internment in World War II—and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the anti-Communist

“Red scares” of the 50's. “The cases have changed,” one of Lee's lawyers, Brian Sun, recently told a group of students at Yale Law School, “but the discrimination and the hostility have not changed, and your generation better be aware of it because you are going to run smack into it, whether you like it or not.”

TO THE degree the ethnic advocates are making inroads, it is indeed on college campuses like Yale. Virtually all Asian-Americans, no matter how poor, excel in school, and for several decades they have been flocking to the nation's top colleges. At Harvard and Yale, they now account for 15 to 20 percent of the undergraduate student body; at the elite campuses of the University of California system, they outnumber all other groups, including whites.

Most of those who make it to an Ivy League college are middle-class and second-generation (or born abroad and raised in the United States) and, as often as not, they have grown up in integrated suburbs. These young people do not generally come to college wearing their ethnicity on their sleeves, but, like so many students today, they almost invariably discover it in the balkanized environment that is a modern university campus.

At Yale, the drama plays itself out in a familiar ritual. In addition to the routine counseling available to underclassmen, minority freshmen are assigned an “ethnic counselor”: an upperclassman whose job it is to help them negotiate whatever alienation or prejudice they encounter. Blacks and Latinos tend to gravitate to these advisers. Many Asian-Americans resist them—but only at first. By graduation time, scarcely an Asian student at Yale has been able to withstand the lure of ethnic involvement.

Many have participated in one of the dozens of ethnic associations open to Asian-Americans, and some make them a focus of their campus lives, giving as much as ten to fifteen hours a week on top of a grueling academic schedule. Others express their ethnicity in a scholarly way, majoring or minoring in “ethnic studies” or writing a thesis on some aspect of their heritage. Still others take courses in the language they did not learn from their parents. And, by the time they are seniors, many who initially avoided their ethnic counselors are eager to serve in that capacity.

Why students should gravitate in this direction is not hard to understand. In their integrated suburbs, many knew no other Asians, and had no one to turn to when they felt mocked or rejected by schoolmates. (Quite a few, even in high school,

looked for this reason to black and Latino friends.) Then, when they arrive at Yale, the Asian connection solves all sorts of problems facing bewildered freshmen. Apparently less comfortable around whites, who do not seem as serious or studious (and who can also strike Asians as shockingly disrespectful of their parents), many end up eating exclusively at "Asian tables" in the dining halls and forming friendships mostly with other Asian-Americans. A walk around the campus reveals some interracial dating and friendship, but also a great deal of ethnic clustering. A number of Asian Yalies also report stiff peer pressure to organize their lives around their ethnicity, and those who do often find that the ethnic focus has a sharp political edge.

The politics are grievance politics of the kind favored by embittered activists. Students who never particularly noticed race in high school learn at college to count the number of Asians in any room or gathering. For some, discovering their minority status breeds a desire for minority privileges: they want to be part of the quota that gets into medical school or gets a management-consulting job with McKinsey & Company. Still others say they envy black pride and black militancy. And the most confrontational make no pretense: they are actively looking for grievances to galvanize their community. The Yale environment rewards this kind of chauvinism; ethnic activists are honored with all the status the school can confer, including membership in its prestigious and once exclusively WASP senior societies.

IF THE campuses exert one kind of anti-assimilationist pressure, another kind, more purely social, knits together the middle-class Asian-American enclaves that dot California and several eastern states. Unlike in the past, when immigrants huddled first in urban ghettos but then moved out to relatively integrated suburbs, today's suburban Asian-Americans have created upscale Chinatowns and Indian villages complete with shopping malls, expensive restaurant rows, ethnic movie theaters, community banks, native-language Rotary Clubs, and more.

Not all of these enclaves are majority-Asian. Monterey Park outside Los Angeles is predominantly Chinese, but the ethnic concentration in many nearby towns—Alhambra, Rosemead, Hacienda Heights—runs to more like 30 or 40 percent; and few of the Asians dispersed through Silicon Valley live in recognizably Asian neighborhoods. Still, it is possible to reside in, say, Hacienda Heights and speak mostly Chinese, both at home

and at work, do all your shopping in stores that specialize in Asian products, socialize exclusively with people who look like you, get all your news from "in-language" ethnic media, and even manage your six-figure professional income without ever speaking a word of English (by patronizing ATM's with Mandarin screens or the local Charles Schwab branch where business is done largely in Chinese).

These enclaves are entirely voluntary. Asians have been able to live wherever they want in most parts of America for at least 45 years now, and many residents claim they have chosen their ethnic bubbles largely for convenience's sake—often, particularly for the Chinese, to be near restaurants and supermarkets that carry ethnic products. But once the clustering begins, it can take on a momentum of its own, creating a kind of insularity that is often difficult to crack.

The worst of the barriers are linguistic. In the Bay Area, there are three TV channels and numerous radio stations in both Mandarin and Cantonese, as well as some half-dozen Chinese-language newspapers. These are no old-fashioned ghetto tabloids: both print and broadcast outlets review the latest-American movies, albeit in Chinese, and the newspapers feature ads for suburban dream houses.

The problem is that these media do not always cover the same news as the mainstream media. A big topic in the Bay Area Chinese press in recent years has been local disputes between Asians and environmentalists over killing live animals for meat. Yet the California ballot initiatives to end affirmative action and bilingual education—presumably matters of real moment to these communities—have received scant attention. According to local leaders, up to 60 percent of the Chinese in the region get their news solely or primarily from ethnic outlets. And even in the more porous enclaves, it can be difficult to tell what exactly is American about residents' lives.

HOW MUCH will the campus experience, or life in the enclaves, slow Asian-American assimilation? The oppositional multiculturalism that young Asians pick up at college plainly leaves some mark. A comparison of twenty-something Asian-Americans with their parents reveals considerably greater ambivalence in the younger generation about the very word "assimilation." "I don't like the sound of it," said one recent college graduate I spoke to, a Chinese-American living in Los Angeles. "If what it means is joining a mainstream that's defined as white, then I'm not interested, and I don't know

many people like me who are." Others who have been through the college ethnic experience seem to face the world with an extra measure of pessimism, convinced that they are going to encounter anti-Asian prejudice even if they have never before experienced it.

But the important question is whether and how long such emotions will last. And strikingly, in contrast to many of their black and Latino peers, even the most ethnically aware Asians at Yale seem to see that their separateness has limits. "Of course it's a loaded term," one Chinese-American woman noted honestly. "But we're all 'assimilated.' If we weren't, we wouldn't be at Yale."

Whatever their influence on college campuses, embittered Asian activists appear to have little following among the broader rank and file, as the sparse attendance at the Cal State rally vividly attests; and among Asian-Americans over twenty-five, it is hard to find *anyone* with a bad word to say about assimilation. "I don't see why people would not want to assimilate," said Dan Yuen, a Chinese-American lawyer in Silicon Valley. "Assimilation is not a dirty word," stressed Samson Wong, thirty-eight, a journalist in San Francisco. Lester Lee, the CEO of a computer-products manufacturer and a well-connected player in California state politics, drew an explicit distinction between "civil-rights-movement types"—whether black or Latino or Asian—and ethnic Asians like himself who "want to be Americans. We see that the opportunity is right here and that all we have to do is participate. We want to participate. We want to contribute." "I make every effort to assimilate," agreed Charlie Woo, who runs a large wholesale toy firm and is a major civic figure in Los Angeles. "I make every effort to be American first."

As for the ethnic enclaves, whether or not they will end up retarding assimilation is something that may not be known for a generation. There is no question that the cultural resources they offer permit a kind of existence that would be difficult to sustain in a more neutral environment. But even the most insular of these towns are less segregated than they appear.

Many Asian enclave-dwellers, particularly in the Bay Area and in Silicon Valley, make a major effort to participate in mainstream civic life, serving far out of proportion to their numbers on school boards and in PTA's and philanthropic organizations. While adults may socialize mainly with similar-looking adults, their children tend to play and go to school with a much more diverse circle of friends. And young people who have grown up in

these suburbs scoff at the idea that they might get stuck there. "Our parents knew the score," said one young man, a computer programmer. "They knew we were learning English."

Ultimately, according to many enclave residents, it is the environment *outside* the bubble, not within it, that will make all the difference. Mostly what they seem to want from that environment is simple tolerance. Some, particularly those who discovered diversity at college, say they feel it would be easier to integrate into a mainstream that recognized their heritage. "I don't like the word 'assimilate,'" said one young man, a Korean-American, taking a standard line, "though I guess I can do it if it's a two-way street." Others, both in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley, advanced a more subtle argument: a defense of what might be called diversity with a small "d." "California is so cosmopolitan, you don't have to think about ethnicity here," said Sid Agrawal, an Indian-American engineer-turned-entrepreneur. "It just doesn't matter—to anyone."

INDEED, IF Agrawal and others like him are any guide, Asian-Americans may be pointing toward a model of ethnic absorption that is, if not exactly new, then largely forgotten in America today. As a group, they seem as keen as any other minority to hold on to their heritage and whatever it is that makes them ethnic. But most, both young and old, are determined to balance the two sides of their existence—the Asian *and* the American. What makes them different from other contemporary minorities is that most see no inherent conflict in doing so.

Unlike many blacks, for example, who, in the famous words of W.E.B. Du Bois, are forever wrestling with their "two-ness"—"the Negro" and "the American," "two warring ideals in one dark body"—most Asian-Americans seem to feel that they can have it both ways. "I'm determined to hold on to my Chinese heritage and my Chinese culture," said one young man, a recent graduate of Stanford. "But there's absolutely nothing about America that I reject because of my ethnicity." Toy-importer Charlie Woo agreed: "They're two parallel tracks, and there's no reason to choose between them." Sid Agrawal, the engineer, lives in a neighborhood that is 30-percent Indian and that boasts, among other amenities, a multiplex cinema specializing in Hindi movies. But he is absolutely confident that his children will rise as high in American life as the children of any other professionals, and he sees no reason why his choice of neighborhood or friends should in any way limit his absorption in the United States.

As if updating the 19th-century Russian Jewish poet J.L. Gordon, whose ideal was to be “a Jew at home and a man in the street,” many Asian-Americans are convinced it is possible to lead a two-track life, at once ethnic and assimilated. And so far, statistical evidence supports their confidence. Although Asian-Americans, like blacks and Latinos, are what some call a “visible minority,” their path is very different—a much more direct and rapid march toward mainstream life.

Asian naturalization rates are about twice the Latino figures, and the proportion who become citizens is significantly larger than the share of other foreign-born residents. Asian-Americans are more likely to marry outside their ethnic group. (By the third generation, according to the 1990 census, 42 percent of Asian-American women have married non-Asians.) On home ownership, another classic measure of assimilation, Asians stand out: the U.S.-born are more likely to own a home than any other group in the country, including U.S.-born whites. Whether they own or rent, Asians (even those in the enclaves) live in less segregated neighborhoods than blacks do. As for language acquisition, many in the immigrant generation struggle with English, but virtually all their children learn it fluently; and by the third generation, some 85 percent of Asian-Americans speak *only* English.

Other measures of assimilation are more anecdotal. According to Eliot Kang, an advertising executive who specializes in marketing to Asian-Americans, U.S.-born Asians making more than \$100,000 a year watch the same TV and read the same magazines as white people—in contrast to blacks, whose list of favorite TV shows hardly overlaps with that of white viewers. More striking still, according to the sociologist Sharon Lee, more than 50 percent of children born to couples of one Asian and one Caucasian parent identify themselves as white, not Asian. (Again in stark contrast, virtually no children of mixed black-and-white marriages identify as white.) A U.S. government study conducted in the mid-90's found that 30 percent of those who normally check an Asian nationality on their census forms would check “multiracial” instead if that were an option, reducing the number of self-declared Asian-Americans from 4 percent of the population to 2.7 percent.

JUST WHAT will remain Asian about Asian-Americans in the face of rapid change like this? Of the aspects of their heritage that seems to mean most to them—food, language, and values—values, particularly family values, and their respect for tradi-

tion and authority will likely prove most durable. But even if most Asian-Americans find a way to be both ethnic at home and citizens in the street, the question remains what kind of citizens they will be—specifically, what kind of political citizens.

Among Asians themselves, it is a common stereotype that they are not particularly political—that they shun confrontation in favor of cultivating connections with those in power. True or not, political participation, as measured by conventional yardsticks like voter-registration rates, has traditionally lagged behind that of the general public. In California, for example, Asian-Americans are 10 percent of the population, but only 4 percent of voters.

Part of the reason for this may be the fact that so many in the Asian community are foreign-born, a circumstance that will eventually change. Unlike other minorities, Asians do not tend to live in isolated ethnic neighborhoods (even the California enclaves tend to be relatively integrated), and this geographic dispersal also limits—and will continue to limit—their political clout. Since the 1980's, Asian-Americans have begun to make up for their voting record with political fund-raising, contributing in the last two presidential campaign cycles far out of proportion to their percentage of the electorate. In the wake of the campaign-finance scandal, that, too, may change, though fund-raisers say that a new generation of givers, in Silicon Valley and elsewhere, may be taking up the slack.

Still other questions concern just which way they tend politically—and whether in fact they all tend together. Conventional wisdom holds that when they begin to vote in larger numbers, Asian-Americans will exercise a moderating influence, at once fiscally conservative and driven by traditional social values. Yet, in reality, each of the different nationalities has a different political profile. Like the Japanese, Filipinos (the second largest group) vote heavily Democratic. Chinese-Americans are said to lean Republican, and so far, those who come from Communist countries have likewise tilted toward the GOP, though, being the poorest, they may yet prove susceptible to Democratic blandishments.

When it comes to the litmus-test issue of affirmative action, Asians are skeptical but divided: the percentage that voted for the 1996 California initiative banning racial preferences far exceeded the black and Latino percentages, but, perhaps in deference to the diversity agenda, the total number still fell short of a majority. Just how Asian-Americans will end up exercising their political muscle is also unknown. Many in San Francisco believe that the city will soon emerge as an Asian equivalent of “Lit-

tle Havana" in Miami, with a block of voters, probably to the right of San Francisco norms, rising up to turn the Bay Area into the capital of Asian America. But others scoff at this notion and argue that Asians are more likely to follow the "Jewish model," maintaining their influence largely by means of financial contributions as they work behind the scenes through groups of well-connected community leaders like the "Committee of 100."

None of this will necessarily interfere with relatively fast and easy Asian assimilation, except that the best way to mobilize voters is through grievances, and ethnic grievances tend to breed alienation. The massive registration drives of the mid-1990's—some 75,000 new Asian-American voters joined the rolls nationwide—were fueled by perceived threats to immigration and immigrants' social benefits, whether from then-California governor Pete Wilson or the national Republican party. And recent episodes like the Wen Ho Lee case have given activists ample ammunition for the future. "Developments like this wake you up," said Henry Tang, an investment banker and president of the Committee of 100. "Let's face it," agreed Matt Fong, a Republican from California who ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in 1998, "politics are about galvanizing people, and the issues that galvanize people are setbacks."

Even more than the Wen Ho Lee case or the fund-raising scandal, the problem the activists dwell on most is the "glass ceiling"—the one issue that could indeed drive Asian-Americans leftward. According to a poll of high-tech professionals in Silicon Valley, 80 percent feel that their paths are limited by their ethnicity: in the words of one, "You can be the top technician, but you'll still never get to be president or even vice president." Henry Tang reeled off a barrage of statistics: of the 7,000 seats on the boards of the Fortune 500 companies, fewer than 50—less than 1 percent—are held by Asian-Americans. No top New York City hospitals have Asians on their boards (despite the disproportionate number of Asian doctors who staff them), nor do many major universities (despite the influx of Asian students). According to the 80/20 Initiative, a nationwide campaign to encourage Asian-Americans to vote as a block, in 1998 Asians accounted for only two of 250 cabinet and subcabinet positions in the federal government. Although younger business people assert that things are changing, even they notice that of the Fortune 500, only one company not founded by an Asian has an Asian-American CEO.

And yet, even so, Asian-American politics continue to be remarkably free of the anger and alien-

ation that marks much other minority organizing. Activists in San Francisco know they will have no influence except through coalition politics. And while older community leaders are still agitating for more Asian faces in high places, the younger generation is beginning to move beyond that kind of ethnic politics. According to David Lee, the energetic young director of the Chinese-American Voter Education Committee, "We need politicians who serve our interests, not politicians who look like us."

Community spokesmen of all ages contrast their political style with that of other minorities. "We're not interested in confrontation," said the toy-importer Charlie Woo. "We're not going to *demand* anything." "Instead of fighting for a slice of the pie, why don't you work on growing the pie bigger?" echoed Bay Area community leader Lester Lee. "That's what we're trying to do." Although the theme of the 80/20 Initiative's largest fund-raiser to date was the glass ceiling, the evening's showy political theater was all about patriotism: the dinner began and ended with two Asian-Americans dressed as Uncle Sam and the Statue of Liberty, reciting a long list of cherished American texts and urging the audience to participate even more actively than they already do in the American civic life around them.

FROM THE mid-19th century through World War II, when Asian immigrants faced relentless prejudice and persecution, one of the ugliest canards about them was that they were "unassimilable"—just too foreign and too different ever to fit in. Today, most Asian-American activists repudiate the very idea of fitting in, and many in the mainstream, intoxicated by the idea of diversity, echo and reinforce their poisonous skepticism. Along with ethnic spokesmen, American schools and government officials and corporate marketing departments encourage newcomers to think that assimilation implies an unacceptable subordination and a surrendering of one's true, ethnic identity—a message that only makes it harder for immigrants to make their way into the mainstream.

Still, both the statistical evidence and my conversations with Asian-Americans suggest that assimilation, albeit a particular kind of assimilation, is taking place. Not even the oldest and most acculturated Asian immigrants aspire to lose themselves or their heritage in a homogenized America. But neither do most, not even the youngest and most radical, seem to share the oppositional attitudes and race-obsessed politics of today's civil-

rights establishment. In cities across the country, Asians are charting another course, defining a vision of integration that allows for ethnic differences—sharp, flavorful, persistent differences—at home, but does not make too much of them in public life. It is an ideal that asks for tolerance, but not a public preoccupation with ethnicity. It comes with pride, but not a self-fulfilling prophecy of alienation, and it leaves it to individuals to balance their ethnicity with their citizenship.

Appealing as this may sound, it is not an easy prescription, especially for the young. Both on college campuses and in multiethnic cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, many in the transitional generation are very much at sea—caught between their old-world values and their evolving place in American society. Many feel torn between their revered parents and their peers. Others hop between peer

groups, or neighborhoods, or jobs—one distinctly Asian, one relatively American. Still others change their attitude toward absorption as often as they change outfits. “Sometimes I feel like a pinball,” complained one, a young Chinese American.

For these newcomers, as for generations of immigrants before them, assimilation is a wrenching process under any circumstances. In the end, it can only work in one kind of milieu—a culture in which ethnicity is honored in its place, yet not allowed to upstage the nation’s common enterprise. Only the mainstream—the nation’s teachers, politicians, corporate leaders and marketers—can create, or restore, such an environment. But if the culture were to permit it, these latest newcomers might yet provide a model for other groups, transforming the minority dynamic in the United States and offering a new lesson in how the melting pot might still work.

Were the Palestinians Expelled?

Efraim Karsh

SINCE THE birth of the Jewish state in 1948, there have been two Arab-Israeli conflicts. The first one was, and is, military in nature. Played out on the battlefield, it has had more than its share of heroes, villains, martyrs, and victims. The second, less bloody but no less incendiary, has been the battle over the historical culpability for the 1948 war and the accompanying dispersion of large numbers of Palestinian Arabs.

The Israeli "narrative" of this episode sees the Palestinian tragedy as primarily self-inflicted, a direct result of the vehement Palestinian/Arab rejection of the United Nations resolution of November 29, 1947 calling for the establishment of two states in Palestine, and the violent attempt by the Arab nations of the region to abort the Jewish state at birth. By contrast, Palestinians view themselves as the hapless victims of a Zionist grand design to dispossess them from their patrimony.

For much of the last half-century, this second battle lay in the background as Israel struggled for survival and the Arab world continued to nourish and from time to time act upon its hope for the Jewish state's extinction by military means. But the focus of

confrontation has now shifted. As the possibility looms of some political resolution to the century-long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the latter have adamantly insisted on reintroducing into debate the events surrounding the 1948 war and the birth of Israel. In the words of the prominent Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi:

They [the Israelis] cannot wipe the slate clean and say: "Now we will deal with history in another way. The political process is a new process and must not be taken back". . . . What we need is, first of all, a genuine recognition, an admission of guilt and culpability by Israel; the real authentic narrative of the Palestinians has to come out, to be acknowledged, to be recognized.

Ashrawi is not invoking history for history's sake. Hers is a clear and far-reaching political agenda: first, to rewrite the history of the 1948 war in a manner that stains Israel politically and morally; then, to force Israel to measure up to its "original sin"—the allegedly forcible dispossession of native Palestinians—both by permitting the return of refugees to parts of the territory that is now Israel and by compensating them monetarily for their sufferings.

For the first time since 1948, this objective seems to be within reach. Fatigued by decades of fighting, and yearning for normalcy, most Israelis, while still nominally opposed to the return of Palestinian refugees, have effectively conceded defeat in the

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factual battle over their past. Not only have substantial elements of the Palestinian narrative—championed within Israel itself by a group of revisionist “new historians”—become the received wisdom in the country’s academic and intellectual circles, but this same view of the past has also made inroads into public consciousness. A number of new high-school textbooks, introduced last year into the Israeli curriculum, repudiate many well-documented and long-established facts about the 1948 war in favor of standard Arab/Palestinian claims, including the charge that substantial numbers of Palestinians were expelled during the war and that Israel bears sole responsibility for their ongoing status as refugees.

“Only ten years ago, much of this was taboo,” the Israeli author of one of the new ninth-grade textbooks boasted to the *New York Times*. “Now we can deal with this the way Americans deal with the Indians and black enslavement.” That is precisely how the Palestinians plan to deal with it as well: i.e., through Israel’s acknowledgment of guilt and the implementation of the Palestinian “right of return.”

The city of Haifa, on Israel’s northwest coast, has come to epitomize this demand for “rectification” (to use Ashrawi’s term). It is not difficult to understand why. In 1948, Haifa’s Arab population was second in size only to that of Jaffa. No less significantly, Haifa then constituted the main socioeconomic and administrative center in northern Palestine for both Arabs and Jews. It was one of the primary ports of the eastern Mediterranean, the hub of Palestine’s railway system, the site of the country’s oil refinery, and a formidable industrial center.

When hostilities between Arabs and Jews broke out in 1947, there were 62,500 Arabs in Haifa; by May 1948, all but a few were gone, accounting for fully a tenth of the total Palestinian dispersion. Little wonder, then, that Haifa has acquired a mythical place in Palestinian collective memory, on a par with Jaffa’s and greater than Jerusalem’s. As the prominent Palestinian author and political activist, Fawaz Turki, himself a native of Haifa, has put it,

You [Israelis] owe me. And you owe me big. You robbed me of my city and my property. You owe me reparations (which I know that you, or your children, will one day have to pay, and under duress if need be) for all the pain and unspeakable suffering you have put me, my family, and my fellow exiles through.

But what exactly happened in Haifa? Was there “an act of expulsion,” as the Palestinians and Israeli “new historians” have argued? Or was the older Israeli contention correct—namely, that the Arabs

who fled the city in 1947-48 did so of their own volition, and/or at the behest of their leaders? During the past decade, as it happens, Israeli and Western state archives have declassified millions of records, including invaluable contemporary Arab and Palestinian documents, relating to the 1948 war and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. These make it possible to establish the truth about what happened in Haifa—and by extension, elsewhere in Palestine.

AS THE British Mandate in Palestine neared its end in 1947-48, the city of Haifa became engulfed in intermittent violence that pitted Arab fighters, recruited locally as well as from neighboring Arab countries, against the Jewish underground organization known as the Hagana. The hostilities would reach their peak on April 21-22, 1948, when the British suddenly decided to evacuate most of the town and each of the two parties moved in quickly to try to fill the vacuum and assert control. But the first thing the documents show is that Arab flight from Haifa began well *before* the outbreak of these hostilities, and even before the UN’s November 29, 1947 partition resolution.

On October 23, over a month earlier, a British intelligence brief was already noting that “leading Arab personalities are acting on the assumption that disturbances are near at hand, and have already evacuated their families to neighboring Arab countries.” By November 21, as the General Assembly was getting ready to vote, not just “leading Arab personalities” but “many Arabs of Haifa” were reported to be removing their families. And as the violent Arab reaction to the UN resolution built up, eradicating any hope of its peaceful enforcement, this stream of refugees turned into a flood.

Thus it was that, by mid-December 1947, some 15,000-20,000 people, almost a third of the city’s Arab population, had fled, creating severe adversity for those remaining. Economic and commercial activity ground to a halt as the wealthier classes converted their assets to gold or U.S. dollars and transferred them abroad. Merchants and industrialists moved their businesses to Egypt, Syria, or Lebanon, causing both unemployment and shortages in basic necessities. Entire areas were emptied of their residents.

These difficulties were exacerbated by deep cleavages within the Arab community itself. The town’s Christian Arabs, erecting clear boundaries between themselves and Muslims, refused to feed the Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi recruits arriving to wrest the city from the Jews, asserted their determination not to attack Jewish forces unless attacked first, and

established a special guard to protect themselves from Muslim violence. Added to this was a growing lawlessness, including pandemic looting of deserted properties.

At the time, the official leadership of Haifa Arabs was a fifteen-member body called the National Committee. Although the Committee strove to curb the mass flight, urging Haifa's Arabs to stay put and castigating those who fled—occasionally, these warnings were backed by the torching of escapees' belongings—its remonstrations proved of no avail.

To be sure, the Committee itself hardly constituted a model of commitment or self-sacrifice. For one thing, scarcely a meeting was attended by all members. For another, affluent though they were, Committee members, while taking care to reimburse themselves for the smallest expense, rarely contributed financially to the national struggle. Transcripts of the Committee's meetings do not exactly convey a grasp of the severity of the situation: they tend to be taken up instead with trivialities, from the placement of an office partition to the payment to a certain individual of £1.29 in travel expenses.

Even when the Committee did try to deal with the cycle of violence in which the town was embroiled, its efforts were repeatedly undermined by the sheer number of armed groups operating in defiance of its authority, by infighting between its own pragmatists and militants, and by the total lack of coordination, if not outright hostility, between the Committee and its parent body, the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). The latter, the effective government of all the Arabs in Palestine, was headed by the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, now resident in Cairo. Giving his own fighters free rein in Haifa, the Mufti turned a deaf ear to the Committee's requests and recommendations. Not even the dispatch of an emergency delegation to Cairo in late January, warning that, if terrorist activity did not cease, the result would be the eventual disappearance of the entire Haifa community, had any effect.

Against this background, the National Committee apparently gave up the hope of stemming further flight. Shortly after the return of the delegation from Cairo, a proposal was passed urging improvements in the condition of Palestinian refugees in the states where they now found themselves, and requesting help in settling them there. This was momentous indeed: the official leadership of the second largest Arab community in Mandate Palestine was not only condoning mass flight but suggesting that Arab refugee status be, however temporarily, institutionalized.

As the months passed and Britain's departure from Palestine neared, such views gained further currency. Even the Mufti, who had warned that "the flight of . . . families abroad will weaken the morale of our noble, struggling nation," was not averse to the evacuation of the nonfighting populace. In March 1948, the AHC evidently ordered the removal of women and children from Haifa; a special committee was established in Syria and Lebanon to oversee the operation, and preparations began in earnest with the chartering of a ship from an Egyptian company.

BY EARLY April 1948, according to Rashid Hajj Ibrahim, the head of the National Committee, the city's Arab populace had dwindled to some 35,000-40,000. (Ibrahim himself, a man who had been active in Haifa's public life for decades, left for Cairo shortly thereafter, never to return.) By the time the final battle for the city was joined a few weeks later, the number had fallen still further, and only about half the town's original community remained.

Not for long: disheartened by the desertion of their local military leaders, and petrified by wildly exaggerated accounts of a Zionist atrocity at the village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, the remnant now took to the road. In the early morning of April 22, as Hagana forces battled their way to the downtown market area, thousands streamed into the port, still held by the British army. Within hours, many of these had fled by trains and buses, while the rest awaited evacuation by sea.

What was left of the local Arab leadership now asked the British military to stop the fighting. When this failed, a delegation requested a meeting with the British commander, Major-General Hugh Stockwell, "with a view to obtaining a truce with the Jews." Having learned from Stockwell the Hagana's terms for such a truce, the delegates then left to consult with their peers, in particular asking the Syrian consul in Haifa to inform his government and the Arab League. In no time, the British ambassador in Damascus, P.M. Broadmead, was summoned to a meeting with Shukri al-Quwaitly, the president of Syria.

Reminding the president that neither of them was familiar with the real situation on the ground, Broadmead begged al-Quwaitly "to urge moderation and to take no action which would bring this local Haifa issue on to a wider plane." To this, al-Quwaitly responded that he "was very nervous concerning public opinion," yet refrained from any threat of military intervention. Thus, no instruc-

tions from Damascus seem to have reached the Haifa truce delegation by four in the afternoon, when it met its Jewish counterpart at city hall.

There, after an impassioned plea for peace and reconciliation by the town's Jewish mayor, Shabtai Levy, the assembled delegates went through the truce terms point by point, modifying a number of them to meet Arab objections. Then the Arabs requested a 24-hour recess "to give them the opportunity to contact their brothers in the Arab states." Although this was deemed unacceptable, a briefer break was approved and the meeting adjourned at 5:20.

When the Arabs returned that evening at 7:15, they had a surprise in store: as Stockwell would later put it in his official report, they stated "that they were not in a position to sign the truce, as they had no control over the Arab military elements in the town and that, in all sincerity, they could not fulfill the terms of the truce, even if they were to sign." They then offered, "as an alternative, that the Arab population wished to evacuate Haifa and that they would be grateful for military assistance."

This came as a bombshell. With tears in his eyes, the elderly Levy pleaded with the Arabs, most of whom were his personal acquaintances, to reconsider, saying that they were committing "a cruel crime against their own people." Yaacov Salomon, a prominent Haifa lawyer and the Hagana's chief liaison officer in the city, followed suit, assuring the Arab delegates that he "had the instructions of the commander of the zone . . . that if they stayed on they would enjoy equality and peace, and that we, the Jews, were interested in their staying on and the maintenance of harmonious relations." Even the stoic Stockwell was shaken. "You have made a foolish decision," he thundered at the Arabs. "Think it over, as you'll regret it afterward. You must accept the conditions of the Jews. They are fair enough. Don't permit life to be destroyed senselessly. After all, it was you who began the fighting, and the Jews have won."

But the Arabs were unmoved. The next morning, they met with Stockwell and his advisers to discuss the practicalities of the evacuation. Of the 30,000-plus Arabs still in Haifa, only a handful, they said, wished to stay. Perhaps the British could provide 80 trucks a day, and in the meantime ensure an orderly supply of foodstuffs in the city and its environs? At this, a senior British officer at the meeting erupted: "If you sign your truce you would automatically get all your food worries over. You are merely starving your own people." "We will not sign," the Arabs retorted. "All is already lost, and it does not matter if everyone is killed so long as we do not sign the document."

Within a matter of days, only about 3,000 of Haifa's Arab residents remained in the city.

WHAT HAD produced the seemingly instantaneous sea change from explicit interest in a truce to its rejection only a few hours later? In an address to the UN Security Council on April 23, Jammal Husseini of the AHC contended that the Arabs in Haifa had been "presented with humiliating conditions and preferred to abandon all their possessions and leave." But this was not so: not only had the Arab leadership in Haifa and elsewhere been apprised of the Hagana's terms several hours before the meeting on April 22, but, as we have seen, the Arab delegates to the meeting had proceeded to negotiate on the basis of those terms and had succeeded in modifying several key elements.

Later writers have spoken of "a Jewish propaganda blitz" aimed at frightening the Arabs into fleeing. Yet the only evidence offered for this "blitz" is a single sentence from a book by the Jewish writer Arthur Koestler, who was not even in Palestine at the time of the battle for Haifa but (in his own words) "pieced together the improbable story of the conquest by the Jews of this key harbor" about a week after his arrival on June 4—that is, nearly two months after the event. As against this isolated second-hand account, there is an overwhelming body of evidence from contemporary Arab, Jewish, British, and American sources to prove that, far from seeking to drive the Arabs out of Haifa, the Jewish authorities went to considerable lengths to convince them to stay.

This effort was hardly confined to Levy's and Salomon's impassioned pleas at city hall. The Hagana's truce terms stipulated that Arabs were expected to "carry on their work as equal and free citizens of Haifa." In its Arabic-language broadcasts and communications, the Hagana consistently articulated the same message. On April 22, at the height of the fighting, it distributed a circular noting its ongoing campaign to clear the town of all "criminal foreign bands" so as to allow the restoration of "peace and security and good neighborly relations among all of the town's inhabitants." The following day, a Hagana broadcast asserted that "the Jews did and do still believe that it is in the real interests of Haifa for its citizens to go on with their work and to ensure that normal conditions are restored to the city."

On April 24, a Hagana radio broadcast declared: "Arabs, we do not wish to harm you. Like you, we only want to live in peace. . . . If the Jews and [the] Arabs cooperate, no power in the world will ever attack our country or ignore our rights." Two days later, informing its Arab listeners that "Haifa has

returned to normal," the Hagana reported that "between 15,000 and 20,000 Arabs had expressed their willingness to remain in the city," that "Arab employees had been appointed to key posts," and that Arabs had been given "part of the corn, flour, and rice intended for the Jews in Haifa." And on April 27, the Hagana distributed a leaflet urging the fleeing Arab populace to return home: "Peace and order reign supreme across the town and every resident can return to his free life and resume his regular work in peace and security."

That these were not hollow words was evidenced by, *inter alia*, the special dispensation given to Jewish bakers by the Haifa rabbinate to bake bread during the Passover holiday for distribution among the Arabs, and by the April 23 decision of the joint Jewish-Arab Committee for the Restoration of Life to Normalcy to dispatch two of its members to inform women, children, and the elderly that they could return home. In a May 6 fact-finding report to the Jewish Agency executive (the effective government of Jewish Palestine), Golda Meir told her colleagues that while "we will not go to Acre or Nazareth to return the Arabs [to Haifa] . . . our behavior should be such that if it were to encourage them to return—they would be welcome; we should not mistreat the Arabs so as to deter them from returning."

The sincerity of the Jewish position is attested as well by reports from the U.S. consulate in Haifa. Thus, on April 25, after the fighting was over, Vice Consul Aubrey Lippincott cabled Washington that the "Jews hope poverty will cause laborers [to] return [to] Haifa as many are already doing despite Arab attempts [to] persuade them [to] keep out." On April 29, according to Lippincott, even Farid Saad of the National Committee was saying that Jewish leaders had "organized a large propaganda campaign to persuade [the] Arabs to return." Similarly, the British district superintendent of police reported on April 26 that "every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay and carry on with their normal lives, to get their shops and businesses open, and to be assured that their lives and interests will be safe." Several more reports in the same vein were sent by British authorities in Palestine to their superiors in London.

MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, as the Jews were attempting to keep the Arabs in Haifa, an ad-hoc body, the Arab Emergency Committee, was doing its best to get them out. Scaremongering was a major weapon in its arsenal. Some Arab residents received written threats that, unless they left town, they would be branded as traitors deserving of

death. Others were told they could expect no mercy from the Jews. Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Murad of the National Committee, who had headed the truce negotiating team, proved particularly effective at this latter tactic: on April 23, he warned a large group of escapees from the neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas, who were about to return to their homes, that if they did so they would all be killed, as the Jews spared not even women and children. On the other hand, he continued, the Arab Legion had 200 trucks ready to transfer the Haifa refugees to a safe haven, where they would be given free accommodation, clothes, and food.

The importance of these actions cannot be overstated. The Emergency Committee was not a random collection of self-appointed vigilantes, as some Palestinian apologists would later argue. Rather, it was the successor to the Haifa National Committee and involved two National Committee members: Farid Saad and Sheikh Murad. In other words, *the evacuation of the Haifa Arab community was ordered, and executed, by the Arab Higher Committee's official local representatives*. The only question is whether those representatives did what they did on their own, or under specific instructions from above.

As I indicated earlier, the Haifa leaders had been extremely reluctant to accept or reject the Hagana's truce terms on their own recognizance: hence the initial appeal to their peers, and hence the request for a 24-hour recess to seek the advice of the Arab states. When this was not granted, and the Committee had to make do with the brief respite granted to it, its delegates proceeded to telephone the AHC office in Beirut for instructions. They were then told explicitly not to sign, but rather to evacuate. Astonished, the Haifa delegates protested, but were assured that "it is only a matter of days" before Arab retaliatory action would commence, and "since there will be a lot of casualties following our intended action, . . . you [would] be held responsible for the casualties among the Arab population left in the town."

This entire conversation was secretly recorded by the Hagana, and its substance was passed on to some of the Jewish negotiators at city hall. In retrospect, it helps explain a defiant comment made at the meeting by the Arab delegates after they announced the intended evacuation—namely, that "they had lost [the] first round but . . . there were more to come." From Yaacov Salomon, one of the Jewish negotiators, we also learn of certain other emotions experienced by his Arab interlocutors:

The Arab delegation arrived at the evening meeting under British escort, but when the meeting

broke up they asked me to give them a lift and to take them home. I took them in my car.

On the way back they told me that they had instructions not to sign the truce and that they could not sign the truce on any terms, as this would mean certain death at the hands of their own people, particularly the Muslim leaders, guided by the Mufti. . . . While therefore they would remain in town, as they thought that would be best in their own interests, they had to advise the Arabs to leave.

In any case, what the Hagana had learned by covert means became public knowledge within days. Already on April 25, the American consulate in Haifa was reporting that the "local Mufti-dominated Arab leaders urge all Arabs [to] leave [the] city and large numbers [are] going." Three days later it pointed a clear finger: "Reportedly Arab Higher Committee ordering all Arabs [to] leave." Writing on the same day to the colonial secretary in London, Sir Alan Cunningham, the British high commissioner for Palestine, was equally forthright: "British authorities in Haifa have formed the impression that total evacuation is being urged on the Haifa Arabs from higher Arab quarters and that the townsfolk themselves are against it." Finally, a British intelligence report summing up the events of the week judged that, had it not been for the incitement and scaremongering of the Haifa Arab leadership, most Arab residents might well have stayed.

WITHOUT A past there can be no future. Today, as the saga of Israel's birth is being turned upside down, with aggressors portrayed as hapless victims and victims as aggressors, it can be only a matter of time before the Jewish state is presented with the bill for its alleged crimes against the Palestinian refugees. Indeed, this past May, as part of the commemoration of the 52nd anniversary of the 1948 war (in Palestinian parlance, *al-Nakba*, the catastrophe), Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority attempted to link any final-status settlement with Israel to the return of refugees to their homes in Haifa and Jaffa. Organized tours brought scores of Palestinians to locations in Israel abandoned in 1948, and the Arab-language Jerusalem newspaper *al-Quds* bemoaned "the uprooting of the Palestinian people in one of the worst crimes of modern history."

But were they uprooted, and if so by whom? In Haifa, one of the largest and most dramatic locales of the Palestinian exodus, not only had half the

Arab community fled the city before the final battle was joined, but another 5,000-15,000 apparently left voluntarily during the fighting while the rest, some 15,000-25,000 souls, were ordered or bullied into leaving against their wishes, almost certainly on the instructions of the Arab Higher Committee. The crime was exclusively of Arab making. There was no Jewish grand design to force this departure, nor was there a psychological "blitz." To the contrary, both the Haifa Jewish leadership and the Hagana went to great lengths to convince the Arabs to stay.

These efforts, indeed, reflected the wider Jewish attitude in Palestine. *All* deliberations of the Jewish leadership regarding the transition to statehood were based on the assumption that, in the Jewish state that would arise with the termination of the British Mandate, Palestine's Arabs would remain as equal citizens.

And just there, no doubt, lay the reason why the Arab leadership preferred the evacuation of Haifa's Arabs to any truce with the Hagana. For according to the UN partition resolution, Haifa was to be one of the foremost towns of the new Jewish state; hence, any agreement by its Arab community to live under Jewish rule would have amounted to acquiescence in Jewish statehood in a part of Palestine. This, to both the Palestinian leadership and the Arab world at large, was anathema.

Shortly after the fall of Haifa to the Hagana, Abd al-Rahman Azzam, the secretary-general of the Arab League, declared: "The Zionists are seizing the opportunity to establish a Zionist state against the will of the Arabs. The Arab peoples have accepted the challenge and soon they will close their account with them." At the time, the cost of this fiery determination by the Arab peoples to "close their account" with the Zionists included the driving of tens of thousands of their hapless fellow-Arabs from their homes. This simple, incontrovertible fact has never been acknowledged in the Arab world. Instead, and in moral collusion with many of today's war-weary Israelis, responsibility for the 1948 Arab aggression and its tragic consequences has been placed squarely on the shoulders of the Zionists themselves.

And so the account lies open. Today, *mutatis mutandis*, Hanan Ashrawi, Fawaz Turki, and a host of others are keeping faith with the spirit of Abd al-Rahman Azzam. It only remains to be seen whether the descendants of the Jews who in 1948 pleaded with Haifa's Arabs to stay will keep faith with the truth, and act on it.

Bellow at 85, Roth at 67

Norman Podhoretz

I AM not the only critic to have been reminded in recent months that once during the 1950's, when novelists of Jewish origin had suddenly moved to center stage in this country, Saul Bellow—referring to a well-known men's-clothing manufacturer of the time—characteristically cracked that he, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth had become the Hart, Schaffner & Marx of American literature. With the death of Malamud in 1986, only Bellow, who has just turned eighty-five, and Roth, sixty-seven, are left among us, and both have just produced new novels.

Roth's, entitled *The Human Stain*,¹ is his third in as many years, which is a remarkable feat for a serious writer at any stage of his career; and the continued vitality Bellow demonstrates in *Ravelstein*² at so advanced an age is equally remarkable. What is perhaps an even more impressive sign of vitality is that, in addition to a new novel, Bellow recently fathered a new baby. When asked by an old friend how he did it, the much-married Bellow's answer was just as characteristic as his Hart-Schaffner-&-Marx crack: "I've had a lot of practice." Well, he has also had a lot of practice writing—and it shows. As for Roth, though nearly eighteen years younger, he too has had a lot of practice writing (having, in

fact, turned out more books than Bellow), and it shows as well.

But it is not merely the coincidence of publication dates that justifies discussing these two writers and their latest works together. For a start, there are certain curious similarities between the two novels. I hasten to add that these similarities do not extend to the all-important issue of style. No sentient or experienced reader could possibly mistake *Ravelstein* for a book by Roth, or by anyone else, for that matter: the word "inimitable," so promiscuously thrown about by reviewers, applies perfectly to Bellow's unique fusion of the high-literary and the demotic, with a spicy dash of the locutions and rhythms of Yiddish mixed in. Nor would *The Human Stain* sound to anyone with ears to hear like the writing of Bellow. If Roth's prose does not bear quite so identifiable a signature as Bellow's, it is still his and his alone.

Style aside, there remain interesting resemblances between *Ravelstein* and *The Human Stain*. The most obvious and striking is that both novels use almost exactly the same narrative device. Thus, it is at the behest of a late friend that Chick, the narrator of *Ravelstein*, has produced this book about the title character. Bellow makes so little effort to distance himself from Chick that it becomes impossible to regard the narrator as comparable to,

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¹ Houghton Mifflin, 361 pp., \$26.00.

² Viking, 233 pp., \$24.95.

say, Nick Carraway in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* or the figure of Marlow in a number of Joseph Conrad's stories and novels. Besides being, like Bellow, a Jewish writer in Chicago, Chick speaks in Bellow's voice and gives vent to Bellow's views and opinions; he also undergoes experiences that Bellow himself has undergone and that are hardly altered in the rendering. Practically the only such alteration he makes is to present himself not as the Nobel-prize-winning novelist he is but as a humble "midlist biographer."

In *The Human Stain*, the narrator—for the eighth time in Roth's novels—is Nathan Zuckerman, whom Roth has dubbed not so much his alter ego as his "alter brain." How much distance exists here, or in previous novels, between Roth and Zuckerman is difficult to determine. In the postmodernist spirit of mystification to which Roth has an unfortunate tendency to succumb now and then, he wants to keep us in the dark as to how fully he is to be identified with Zuckerman. But as the years pass and the novels pile up, it becomes harder and harder for someone like myself, who has been following Roth's work from the very beginning and has read just about every word he has ever published, to distinguish between the author and even most of his other protagonists or narrators (going all the way back to Neil Klugman of *Goodbye, Columbus* and Alexander Portnoy of *Portnoy's Complaint*), let alone to Nathan Zuckerman. Indeed, it is even hard to tell how much distance there is between the author and a character actually named Philip Roth in *Operation Shylock*.

This close identification between Roth and Zuckerman (to stick with him) does not necessarily include the details of Roth's life to the degree that it does with Bellow in *Ravelstein*. I happen to know that Bellow, like Chick in *Ravelstein*, nearly died from eating a poisoned fish in the Caribbean, whereas I do not know (and have never tried to find out) whether Philip Roth has, like Zuckerman, suffered from prostate cancer and then been left impotent and incontinent by surgery.

I also happen to know that every character in *Ravelstein*, including Ravelstein himself, is based on a real person: though "based" is too weak a word to describe what are actually portraits of persons who are fictionalized only to the point of appearing under made-up names. I do not, however, know any such thing about *The Human Stain*. Though I suspect that it helps itself freely to the experience of Roth and people he has met or heard about, I would bet that much more of this book is the product of invention than *Ravelstein* is. It has repeatedly been proposed,

for instance, that the model for the hero of *The Human Stain* was the critic Anatole Broyard, but even if that is true, Broyard had so different a biography from the one Roth gives to his hero that the character can be accepted as a genuinely fictional creation.

IN DUE course I will go into the question of why all this is worth bringing up, but for the moment I want to dwell a bit more on the parallels between these two books by writers as different as Bellow and Roth. If Chick has produced *Ravelstein* because the late Abe Ravelstein himself—a college professor—asked him to write his biography, so too, the genesis of *The Human Stain* lies in a request by Nathan Zuckerman's late friend Coleman Silk—also a college professor—to do a book about certain horrific things that had happened to him but which he himself had been unable to get down properly on paper.

As Hamlet lies dying, he tells his friend Horatio not to follow him immediately into the grave:

O good Horatio, what a wounded name
(Things standing thus unknown) shall
live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath
in pain,
To tell my story.

Bellow and Roth, each in his own way, play Horatio in their latest works to departed friends. In doing so, they both inevitably find themselves dwelling much on mortality. This is a theme that has preoccupied Roth almost obsessively since the two novels—*An American Pastoral* and *I Married a Communist*—that immediately preceded *The Human Stain* and that he somewhat mysteriously regards as the first two volumes of a trilogy of which his new book is the completion. (I say "mysteriously" because I cannot detect much that brings the three novels together.)

For his part, Bellow, whose nature contains very little, if any, morbidity, has (if memory serves) never before focused quite so sharply on death as he does in *Ravelstein*. Obviously, he has written about it often, but—so it seems to me—the idea of mortality hovers more heavily over this book than it does over any of his others.

Another theme that is central both to *Ravelstein* and *The Human Stain* is sex. It was, of course, largely (though by no means entirely) because of the explicit scenes of sexual activity in *Portnoy's Complaint* that Roth first achieved great fame and

notoriety; and it has become increasingly evident that age has not withered his interest in the subject nor custom staled the infinite variety of erotic delights he feels compelled to explore in his writings.

After (to speak very relatively indeed) giving sex a bit of a rest in *An American Pastoral* and *I Married a Communist*, Roth has returned to it with a vengeance in *The Human Stain*. At the center of this novel is a torrid affair between a seventy-one-year-old man, helped along by Viagra, and a woman in her thirties symbolically named Faunia. This creature (one of the most implausible characters Roth has ever given us) has sexual appetites that are almost, if not quite, on a par with those of Drenka, the heroine of *Sabbath's Theater*. Drenka excited so much lust in the men on whom she bestowed her favors that, after her death, they took to masturbating over her grave (thereby showing that Roth, having in *Portnoy's Complaint* been perhaps the first serious American novelist to write openly about masturbation, could go even himself one better).

Just as an affair between an old man and a young woman is at the heart of *The Human Stain*, so *Ravelstein* has as one of its main threads the story of a marriage between an old man (Bellow posing as Chick) and a young woman. True, this thread does not wind itself in *Ravelstein* through descriptions of sexual activity (and in general, where sex is concerned, Bellow has been a reticent prude as compared with Roth). But to both writers, the preoccupation with death is tempered by their continuing interest in sex.

Sex is not conceived either by Roth or Bellow as an escape from death. On the contrary: in *The Human Stain*, if his affair with Faunia revives Coleman Silk from a long bout of despair, it also eventually leads to his death; and if Chick is snatched from the grave by his young wife's (nonsexual but loving) diligence, the homosexual Ravelstein is sent to his grave by AIDS. J. Bottom of the *Weekly Standard* has discerned in these contrasting fates of Chick and Ravelstein a statement about the essential difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality. It is an intriguing interpretation, but not one that entirely convinces. For the upshot—admittedly encrusted with many complications—is that to Bellow, as to Roth, sex signifies life, not death.

FINALLY, *Ravelstein* and *The Human Stain* provide new variations on a theme that runs through almost all the works of Bellow and Roth alike: the drive of so many Americans to cut loose from the genetic and social moorings of birth and to create themselves anew in images of their own devising. With Roth's characters, this drive has

usually assumed the form of an effort to escape from Jewishness and the constrictions that he—and they—have associated with it.

In Bellow, who has always had more positive and affectionate feelings toward Jewishness than Roth, what needs to be fled is the imposition of the conventional wisdoms that happen to be around at any given time. This is what connects one of his earliest heroes, Augie March, who was determined to “go at things” his own way, to his latest, Ravelstein, who (admittedly in this respect more Roth- than Bellow-like) loathes his midwestern Jewish family and forges a new self through the Great Books stemming from Athens and Jerusalem (if more the former than the latter) with which he falls in love at the University of Chicago.

There is also a line between, say, Alexander Portnoy and Coleman Silk, but it is given a highly ironic twist by Roth. In this instance, the character fleeing his origins, who we are at first told is a Jew (but, as a professor of classics, more a product of Athens than Jerusalem—in *this* respect being more Ravelstein- than Portnoy-like) turns out to be a light-skinned black who has successfully been passing as a Jew.³

Obviously, Silk's decision to renounce his racial and ethnic heritage is taken, and rightly so, as a gross betrayal by his family, and especially by his brother. The attitude of Roth (or am I supposed to say Nathan Zuckerman?) is more ambivalent: to him, there is something heroic about Silk, but he does not dismiss the charge of betrayal out of hand. The two are inexorably intertwined. As Roth told Charles McGrath, the editor of the *New York Times Book Review*, in a rare interview: “Self-transformation. Self-invention. The alternative destiny. Repudiating the past. Powerful stuff.”

It struck me as strange, however, that Roth makes so little of the fact that Silk should have decided to pass as a Jew rather than as a white Gentile. Given the evolution of Roth's own attitudes toward Jewishness—from the outright disaffection expressed in the youthful *Goodbye, Columbus* and *Portnoy's Complaint* to a growing sympathy and identification in some of his later works—I would have expected him to do more than he does with the changes in American society which have persuaded Silk that pretending to be Jewish has in some quarters become a greater advantage than passing as a WASP. But when McGrath suggests that this is “a book . . . about issues of race and of Ju-

³ The main character in Ralph Ellison's posthumous novel *June-teenth* is also a black passing as white. Conceivably Roth, a great admirer of Ellison, was more inspired by this literary precedent than he was by the life of Anatole Broyard.

daism and where the two intersect," Roth quickly disagrees, declaring that there was "nothing about Judaism in this book," and going on to explain why Silk chooses to take on a Jewish identity:

As a means of deception, as a social disguise, as a pretext for his appearance. He doesn't want to be a Jew for anything like the reasons that Frank Alpine, say, in Malamud's novel *The Assistant* wants to be a Jew. Coleman's choice has nothing to do with the ethical, spiritual, theological, or historical aspects of Judaism. . . . It's a cunning choice that successfully furnishes him with a disguise in the flight from his own "we." The choice is strictly utilitarian.

All this is true, but one reason I would have expected Roth to explore the implications of it in the novel itself is that, in the same interview, he stresses the importance of historical and political events in his "trilogy." If I could find nothing that binds these three novels together, to their author they are of a piece because the lives of their characters are interpenetrated by the "historical moments in postwar America that have had the greatest impact on my generation." The three moments he mentions are McCarthyism, Vietnam, and the impeachment of Bill Clinton. Yet surely the change for the better in the fortunes and status of Jews and blacks in America has a better claim to a place on that list than the impeachment of Clinton; and while Roth does go on to include race as another of the great developments of the era, he ignores the Jewish issue almost entirely.

IT IS at this juncture that I wish to delve into the question of why such factors are worth considering. In order to answer that question, I have to begin by affirming my belief in the principle of the autonomy of art, according to which works of art should be judged primarily on their aesthetic merits and extraliterary considerations should either be kept out of such judgments or brought in only under two conditions. One is when they impinge on the quality of the work in question—as when the imperatives of propaganda have clearly overridden the dictates of aesthetics (any piece of "socialist realism" will do for an example). The other is when it becomes useful in understanding a work to evoke the broader context out of which it has emerged. Yet even then, I would insist that aesthetic considerations come first.

This does not mean that moral or political factors are *entirely* ruled out in the framing of critical judgments. It does mean, however, that anyone who cares about literature is obligated to acknowledge the ex-

pressive and evocative powers of—to reach into the political sewers for an especially egregious instance—a novel like Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* before going on to condemn it on moral and political grounds. And the converse also applies. That is, the aesthetic weaknesses of a work of art ought not to be overlooked or denied just because it happens to embody moral or political sentiments of which the reader approves.⁴

Philip Roth, while perhaps an even more devout believer in the autonomy of art than I am, has always run into problems with these principles. He is a novelist whose talent is immense and many-sided. His ear and his mimetic skills are of the highest order. He can with equal success be hilarious and vulgar at one moment, almost theologically solemn and even priggish at another, and as lyrical as a first-rate poet at yet another. Topping it all off, he is capable of producing, to borrow a word he himself has used in praising another writer, "gorgeous" prose when the mood is upon him (as it has more and more been in his later years). Reading him, I invariably end up feeling that there is no weapon in the literary arsenal he cannot fire with perfect accuracy—or, to use a somewhat more appropriate metaphor, no instrument in the literary orchestra he cannot play like a virtuoso.

This has been true of him from the word go. When his first book, the collection of stories entitled *Goodbye, Columbus* appeared in 1959, it was Saul Bellow himself, reviewing it in these pages, who said, "*Goodbye, Columbus* is a first book, but it is not the book of a beginner. Unlike those of us who came howling into the world, blind and bare, Mr. Roth appears with nails, hair, and teeth, speaking coherently. At twenty-six he is skillful, witty, and energetic, and performs like a virtuoso."⁵

More than 40 years and 22 books later, Roth has not only retained those powers with which he came

⁴ I am restricting myself here to literature, and more specifically the novel, but the same rule applies to the other arts as well. It has long been recognized that the novel, implicated as it almost always is in the world around it, is an aesthetically "messier" form than lyric poetry or music or painting, which are more capable of remaining fixed within the boundaries of their own formal qualities. For better or worse, then, it is harder for the novel (and this goes for theatrical works as well) than for the other arts to remain sealed off from political and moral issues. Or at least it used to be in the days before painters and sculptors became even more political than writers.

⁵ On the other hand, as D.T. Max recounts in a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine*, Bellow later grew less enthusiastic: "If you crossed him, he didn't forget. After Philip Roth caricatured him in his novel *The Ghost Writer* as Felix Abravanel, a nattily dressed superstar writer who lived 'in the egosphere,' Bellow got back at him on the Dick Cavett show in 1981: 'What hath Roth got?' he said."

into the world but developed and refined and added to them. Despite a few lapses and stumbles as he went along (*When She Was Good*, *The Breast*, and *The Great American Novel*, to name a few), and unlike so many other of his contemporaries who fell by the wayside—either drying up altogether or failing to fulfill their early promise—he has stayed the course, proving himself to be not only a serious writer but an *homme sérieux*: a serious man who demands and deserves to be taken with the utmost seriousness.

To do so, however, requires more than a recognition of his gifts and the admirable tenacity with which he has nourished and exercised and deepened them. It also demands following him into what Lionel Trilling famously called the “dark and bloody crossroads” where literature and politics (and, I would add, morality) meet. For despite Roth’s strong commitment to the autonomy of art, he has never been able to keep himself from straying into those crossroads, jumping around in them with abandon when feeling antic or genuflecting on his knees when infected by a bout of (almost always liberal) piety.

In the political sphere, I am not referring here mainly to a book like *Our Gang*, the crude and cliché-ridden satire he wrote about Nixon during Watergate. Nor, in the moral realm, do I have in mind the fun he made of American Jews early in his career in *Goodbye, Columbus* and *Portnoy’s Complaint* and that got him into so much trouble with the Jewish community. More to the point is the “thematic trilogy” consisting of his last three novels.

The first, *American Pastoral*, is in my opinion the best thing Roth has ever written, and only its structural flaws prevent me from unequivocally pronouncing it a great novel. I was very disappointed by *I Married a Communist*, and my hope that he would soon recover his form has been dashed by *The Human Stain*.⁶

Yet I cannot help asking myself how much the politics of these novels has influenced my critical judgment of them. Did I admire *An American Pastoral* so much because I was delighted by the surprising attack Roth launches there on the radicalism of the 60’s and its liberal apologists, and his even more unexpected defense of the middle-class values that were under such ferocious assault by that radicalism (and by his own younger self)? Was I disheartened by *I Married a Communist* because, instead of following up on what I, and not I alone, admired so much about *An American Pastoral*—the intellectually and spiritually heroic feat it performed in reconsidering the negative attitude toward this country Roth had always shared with most of the literary community—he returned to the same old

stale attitudes in dealing with McCarthyism? And was the dashing of my prediction that this might turn out to be just a temporary regression—possibly even caused by an irresistible urge on Roth’s part to reassure his perplexed and worried faithful admirers that he had not sold out to the neoconservative enemy—responsible for my disappointment in *The Human Stain*?

In all honesty, I cannot dismiss the possibility that such considerations played some part in my differing judgments of these three novels. But only, I must immediately protest, a small one. I claim entitlement to this qualification on the ground that I felt let down by *The Human Stain* even though it centers on what is, to me, a highly congenial and satisfying account of the plague of political correctness in the universities.

COLEMAN SILK is victimized twice over by political correctness. First his academic career is ruined when he uses the word “spooks” (meaning ghosts) to describe two students who never show up in class. Though he does not even know they are black, he is accused of racism, and when he refuses to dignify this preposterous accusation with an apology, none of his friends or colleagues springs to his defense.⁷ Then, as if being ruined by a false charge of racism were not enough, Silk (by now a widower) is excoriated for sexual harassment when he enters into an affair with a female janitor at the college. This additional blow lands on him even though he has by then resigned, thereby becoming immune from the charge that he is using his power to coerce sexual favors from a subordinate in the workplace.

By ridiculing the prevailing tyrannies of political correctness on the issues of both race and sex, Roth shows that McCarthyism—which he surveyed with an unqualifiedly orthodox liberal eye in *I Married a Communist*—has now migrated to the Left; and in this, so far as I am concerned, he is on the side of the angels. Unfortunately, he winds up in less exalted company through his stated ambition to deal with “the historical moments that have had the greatest

⁶ I voiced this hope in an article entitled “The Adventures of Philip Roth,” written shortly after the appearance of *I Married a Communist* and published in the October 1998 issue of COMMENTARY.

⁷ Roth, while fully aware of the irony involved in the fact that Silk, unbeknownst to everyone else, is himself black, seems oddly blind to the additional irony that, from another angle, passing for white does convict Silk of racism. I would have thought that Roth—one of whose favorite authors is Franz Kafka—would pursue this fascinating twist. But he never does. Then again, why should he be expected to do so here when he has never been able to understand that the repudiation of Jewishness by Jews can be taken as a form of anti-Semitism?

impact on [his] generation." The way he pursues this ambition in *The Human Stain* is to connect both Vietnam and the impeachment of Bill Clinton with the trouble Coleman Silk gets into as a result of the tyranny of political correctness in matters of sex.

Despite being kept mostly implicit, this link still requires quite a stretch. But it does help explain why Roth should have made the peculiar choice of the impeachment as a moment of historical impact comparable to that of McCarthyism and Vietnam. Here again, as in *I Married a Communist*, he gives full play to the side of himself that has remained stuck in and intransigently uncritical of the liberal attitudes with which he grew up.

As *The Human Stain* tells it, Clinton (like Silk) was guilty in his alliance with Monica Lewinsky of nothing more than being a normal guy marked, as all of us are, by "the human stain" (something like original sin?). Not a word, not a syllable, in the passages devoted by Roth to the Clinton scandals so much as hints that the President (*unlike* Silk) committed and suborned perjury, and that this was the legal basis on which the attempt was made to remove him from office. Just the opposite: "What was being enacted on the public stage," Roth informs McGrath in their *New York Times Book Review* interview, "seemed to have the concentrated power of a great work of literature. The work I'm thinking of is *The Scarlet Letter*." I rub my eyes in disbelief. Can Philip Roth actually imagine that at its "moral core," today's America, "this huge and unknowable country," is no different from the America of 17th-century Salem?

Such a statement would be breathtaking coming from anyone living at a time and in a place where sex in every shape and form is easily available, advocated, and even celebrated in every public forum and medium of entertainment, and where the only scarlet letters are pasted on those who offer so much as a smidgeon of resistance to this tidal wave of erotomania. But issuing from the mouth of a man who has achieved fame, honor, and riches with books that would have served as the kindling for burning him alive in the world described by Hawthorne, the comparison between the America of today and the America of *The Scarlet Letter* is very nearly demented.

As for Vietnam, it comes in through Lester Farley, the ex-husband of Silk's girlfriend. Farley is a crazed veteran of that war who eventually contrives to kill both his former wife and her present lover, and who, as even Lorrie Moore, one of Roth's liberal admirers, has said in the *New York Times Book Review*, is constructed "from every available cliché

of the Vietnam vet." Has Roth forgotten what he revealed about these very clichés in *An American Pastoral*? Or is he once more offering reassurance to those who worried after reading that book that he might be converting to neoconservatism?

If so, he has only partly succeeded. The same Lorrie Moore who, to her credit as a critic, spotted the character of Lester Farley as a literary weakness, immediately made up for this deviation from her own party line by complaining that *The Human Stain* "indulges in the sort of tirade against political correctness that is far drearier and more intellectually constricted than political correctness itself." But in my opinion what Roth "indulges" in here is not a "tirade": it is, rather, the determination to tell a truth that goes against the grain of his own liberal impulses, and this is to *his* credit.

I suppose the conclusion to be drawn is that in responding to a novel that raises contentious political (and/or moral) issues, it is virtually impossible to ignore—and, worse yet, to blind oneself to—those issues in reaching a critical judgment. To repeat: the aesthetic qualities of the work at hand ought to be the critic's primary concern. But when the novelist insists on leaping into "the bloody crossroads," it is the right and even the duty of the alert reader to follow after and to join in.

IF ROTH's last few novels bring into sharp focus the troublesome problems surrounding the concept of the autonomy of art, Bellow's *Ravelstein* does much the same thing with the possibly even more irksome problem of the relation between novels and the realities on which they often draw. As all the interested world knows, the character of Abe Ravelstein is based on the late Allan Bloom, who was Bellow's dear friend. What is less well-known is that it was at Bellow's urging that Bloom wrote *The Closing of the American Mind*. To everyone's amazement, that book became a huge best-seller in 1987, making a previously penurious and relatively obscure professor at the University of Chicago both rich and famous.

But the hero is not the only portrait in *Ravelstein* of a real-life model. As with himself playing narrator, Bellow takes so little trouble to disguise the characters who appear here that they are all easily recognizable as this or that person. Calling *Ravelstein* a roman à clef therefore verges on understatement. Except for the names of the characters, nothing in it seems to be fictional; nothing seems to be invented. The "plot" consists entirely of incidents surrounding Bellow's friendship with Bloom or that occurred until it ended with Bloom's death. There is the

breakup of Bellow's fourth unhappy marriage and the contracting of his presently happy one to a student of Bloom's; there are the spending sprees on which Bloom goes, frequently accompanied by Bellow, after his book becomes a great best-seller; there is Bloom's illness and death; and there is the near-death of Bellow himself after eating a poisoned fish in the Caribbean.

What we have here, in short, is all clef and no roman: not a novel but a memoir.

Taking the opposite tack, Cynthia Ozick, in a long review in the *New Republic*, advises us to "throw away the clef." Her argument is that "When it comes to novels, the author's life is nobody's business. A novel, even when it is autobiographical, is not an autobiography." Nor is a novel a biography: "Ravelstein is not Bloom." And she concludes, "What is a novel? A persuasion toward dramatic interiority. A word-board that permits its inventor to stand undefined, unprescribed, liberated from direction or coercion. Freedom makes sovereignty; it is only when the writer is unfettered by external expectations that clarity of character . . . can be imagined into being."

Ozick's brief in support of her position about the novel in general, and of *Ravelstein's* right to be considered one, is dazzling and written with her usual brilliant flair. But it flows from two assumptions that are less than self-evident or axiomatic. One is that "the literary novel (call it the artist's novel)" is superior in kind to such other literary forms as biography and memoir. Bellow would undoubtedly agree with Ozick, which is almost certainly one of the reasons he decided to offer this book about Allan Bloom as a novel rather than as a straightforward memoir. (Other reasons may involve a different and lower order of "freedom" from the one celebrated by Ozick: that is, the freedom to give the business to certain people—an ex-wife and an ex-friend or two—without the complications involved in using their real names.)

In her review of *Ravelstein*, however, Ozick comes close to ignoring the bold and brave warning she once sounded against violating the second of the Ten Commandments by turning art into an idol to be worshiped. Here she reminds me of the great British critic F.R. Leavis. It was Leavis who taught that the quasireligious attitude toward poetry in the Victorian age was a significant factor in the decline of that form, whereas the lesser regard in which the novel was held had the opposite effect. Yet Leavis himself later went on to speak of the novelists he admired in tones that were reminiscent of the very transports of exaltation for which he had faulted the Victorians.

In any event, with all due respect to Ozick's ven-

eration of the novel, it is no insult or denigration of *Ravelstein* to read it as a memoir. I would go even further by contending that a proper appreciation of Saul Bellow is impossible without recognizing that he is not now or ever has been a natural novelist. A wonderful writer, yes: probably the best American writer in any genre of the past half-century. But not a born novelist.

The born novelist is defined, for better or worse, by the power to express whatever it is he understands of the world and of life through the telling of stories about people who are made to seem real. Bellow, by contrast, is always telling us what he knows—which is much more than practically any of the born novelists who have marched across the literary stage beside him—through his own voice as informed by his own deep and vast intellect. Hence his stories are not gripping narratives, and his characters rarely, if ever, achieve the separation from their creators of authentic fictional creations. "Every major character in a Bellow novel is, in some way, Bellow," as D.T. Max succinctly puts it in his *New York Times Magazine* article.

What I am trying to get at might be clarified by looking at "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" a once-notorious essay by L.C. Knights. This British scholar-critic raised the question after noticing that, while Lady Macbeth speaks of having "given suck," there is no indication in *Macbeth* of the size of her family. But it was a silly question. Lady Macbeth is not a real person; she is a creature of Shakespeare's imagination,⁸ and since he neglects to provide this information in his play, there is no way to unearth it. Nevertheless, silly and unanswerable as the question might have been, it testified vividly to Shakespeare's success in, as it were, liberating Lady Macbeth from his own head and spinning her off into the illusion of an independent existence of her own.

RARELY, IF ever, does anything comparable happen to Bellow's characters. Even those who least resemble him (Tommy Wilhelm of *Seize the Day*, Henderson of *Henderson the Rain King*, Mr. Sammler of *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, among others) soon turn into mouthpieces or counters for his own ideas. To exaggerate only slightly, Bellow's books are monologues—almost always of surpassing brilliance and great fascination—forced into novelistic form.

⁸ To forestall the obvious objection, I should note that the characters in *Macbeth* were historical personages. In writing a play about them, however, Shakespeare not only relied on his imagination but (lest he be accused of calling into question the legitimacy of Britain's ruling dynasty) misrepresented Macbeth as a usurper when it was actually the other way around.

I am not suggesting any deliberate deception on Bellow's part. I am saying, rather, that his native talent (like that of certain other contemporary writers, James Baldwin for one and Bellow's childhood pal Isaac Rosenfeld for another) got deflected into the wrong channel by the special prestige of the novel as the supreme form of literary art in our time, comparable to what poetry was to the Victorians. This is why, on the few occasions when Bellow has managed to liberate himself from the compulsion to dress up as novels the fruits of his own endlessly fascinating mind and magnificent literary gift, he has been able to bring characters more vividly to life than any who appear in those novels. What is more, these characters are neither mouthpieces for Bellow nor reflections of him.

To Jerusalem and Back—his memoir of a stay in Israel—was one such occasion, and *Ravelstein* (though not presented as a memoir the way *To Jerusalem and Back* was) is, I believe, another. Cynthia Ozick has a point when she asks: "Why should we care for . . . those ephemeral figures that fictional characters are 'based on'? The originals vanish; their simulacra, powerful marvels, endure." But the Allan Bloom depicted as Ravelstein might better be compared with the portrait of, say, Richard Savage by Samuel Johnson. Savage, an otherwise forgotten 18th-century poet, has endured because he was evoked so vividly and poignantly by Dr. Johnson's memoir; and so, I speculate, will be the happy fate of Bloom-Ravelstein. My only regret is that Bellow did not see fit to drop the pretense that he was writing a novel and simply given us much the same book in the form of a memoir called *Bloom*.

Having had a number of encounters with Allan Bloom, I can testify that Bellow captures him with such marvelous accuracy that Ravelstein might actually be, so to speak, the fully realized fictional creation Cynthia Ozick wishes to see in him. Admittedly, my testimony may be impeached by the fact that I was only acquainted with Bloom casually. Many who were much closer to him have heatedly denied that he is adequately depicted in *Ravelstein*, and some have even accused Bellow of betraying Bloom in this book, and in two different senses.

The first is to have "outed" him as a homosexual. The friends of Bloom who denounce this as a betrayal rightly assert that Bloom himself was careful never to make a public point of his homosexuality, and certainly never wanted anything to do with the politicization of his own sexual proclivities as represented by the gay-rights movement. The alleged betrayal here, then, is to have revealed something Bloom wished to keep hidden.

In this perspective, all the worse does the betrayal become when one considers that with his assault on contemporary culture and the degradation of the universities in *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom emerged as one of the most influential conservative intellectuals in the world. Never mind that he eschewed the term "conservative" not only for himself but for the entire school of thought deriving from his master and teacher, the philosopher Leo Strauss. Despite his protestations, virtually everyone else (with good reason, I would say) thought of him as a conservative. Consequently, in the context of the "culture war" in which Bloom's book has played so large a part—a war that has featured the contention over homosexuality as one of its central fronts—Bellow stands accused of providing aid and comfort to his supposedly beloved friend's liberal enemies. Again, never mind that Bloom himself never made an issue of homosexuality one way or the other in his many reflections on eros. By outing him, Bellow has—so the charge goes—made the entire conservative side in the culture war look hypocritical.

To this my response is that Allan Bloom's homosexuality was no great secret, and that Bellow neither intends nor does harm to him or to his reputation in talking so easily about it. Writing in the *New Republic* as a gay-rights activist who is at the same time a self-declared conservative, Andrew Sullivan hopes that "One day, there will be a conservatism civilized enough to deserve [Bloom]." But the only way Sullivan the gay-rights activist can stake a claim to Bloom is to interpret the latter's silence on homosexuality as a loud affirmation: "Bloom was gay, and he died of AIDS. The salience of these facts is strengthened, not weakened, by Bloom's public silence about them."⁹ Yet silence, whether public or private, was not the always exuberantly garrulous Allan Bloom's notion of how to express an idea or make a point.

THE SECOND sense in which Bellow has been accused of betraying Bloom is—according to some of his other friends—to have shown him not as the great soul he is repeatedly called in the book (and that, they maintain, he indeed was in life) but as a vulgar materialist. Having become rich through his best-selling book, he seems to care about noth-

⁹ The question of AIDS brings up a subsidiary aspect of this particular allegation of betrayal on Bellow's part, which is not that he reveals a hidden truth about Bloom but that he spreads a lie. Bloom did not, say his other friends, die of AIDS as Ravelstein does; and Bellow has now admitted that he was not sure about this but merely assumed it.

ing but spending his money on expensive clothes, meals, and suites in luxurious hotels. The most passionate expression of this complaint I have come upon has been voiced by one of Bloom's students, Kenneth R. Weinstein, in the *Weekly Standard*:

Rather than serving up Bloom's thought, Bellow expounds upon the man's colorful habits, including his taste for luxury goods. . . . But without a clear understanding that Bloom's acquisition of Lalique crystal or Lanvin jackets was a lighthearted reflection of his love for beauty itself—the form of beauty, in Plato's sense—he comes off in *Ravelstein* as merely a high-end consumer, an American fop on the Faubourg St. Honoré.

Weinstein's rather solemn explanation of Bloom's taste for luxury could have used a little lightheartedness itself (in truth, Bloom loved luxury for its own sake—and why not?), but otherwise it is fair enough: Bellow does give only a small taste of Bloom's intellectual passions. If *Ravelstein* were really a self-contained novel, this omission would be a serious fault. But not so when we read the book as the memoir of a friendship that takes Bloom's philosophical concerns for granted and (sometimes even explicitly) refers us to his written work for light on him as a thinker instead of attempting to summarize his ideas. (In his "Life of Richard Savage," if I remember rightly, Dr. Johnson does not quote much of Savage's poetry.)

Besides, this criticism of *Ravelstein* for leaving out "Bloom's thought" fails to grasp Bellow's conception of what it means to be, or to have, a great soul. Cynthia Ozick quotes a remark from *The Adventures of Augie March* that captures the essence of Bellow's take on the matter: "He had rich blood. His father peddled apples." This remark is one of my own favorites, too, though my gloss on it differs from hers. Extrapolating from it, I would say that for Saul Bellow, the richness of Allan Bloom's blood (and mind) was thickened by his entanglement with what some dismiss as the grosser things of this world. There is also in Bellow's eyes a kind of greatness—as spiritual as it is material—in the ex-

tremity of Bloom's extravagance, no less than in his insatiable appetite for gossip, especially about the doings in high places, in his presumptuous meddling with the lives of his students, in his delight in dirty jokes (which he exchanges on his death bed with one of his close friends), and so on and so on into the lower depths and the higher reaches of life as it is lived from day to day.

BETRAYAL? IF we are to speak of it at all in discussing the two latest works by Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, the word would better be applied to how Roth's *The Human Stain* has reneged on the tantalizing hopes held out by *An American Pastoral* than to how Bellow treats Allan Bloom in *Ravelstein*. That this infinitely loving portrait should be considered a betrayal is to me nothing short of amazing.

Bellow has always been especially good with closing lines. I will cite only two. *Augie March* ends with: "Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America." And *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, like *Ravelstein*, concludes in a meditation on the death of a friend: "[This man] was aware that he must meet, . . . and he did meet, the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it—that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know."

Tough acts to follow, but Bellow pulls it off in the last line of *Ravelstein*: "You don't easily give up a creature like Ravelstein to death."

Not easily, and thanks to this memoir decked out in the false finery of a novel, maybe not at all. By which I mean that, good as his books are, if Allan Bloom lives on, it will not be through his own writings—though I would not be surprised if *Ravelstein* were to drive readers to seek them out in the future—but in the delightful and wondrous person of Ravelstein and through the love that enabled Saul Bellow to bring his friend back to life more truly than so many of his more pious disciples and comrades-in-arms want to think.

How to Think About Humanitarian War

Adam Wolfson

NO ONE—not even those who supported it from the beginning—can be entirely happy with our war in Kosovo. Our immediate goal was to put a halt to Serbia's brutal treatment of the Kosovo Albanians, several hundred thousand of whom had been displaced into the countryside—and an unknown number killed—by the spring of 1999. But by the time our massive, 78-day bombing campaign ended, an estimated 10,000 Kosovo Albanians were dead, and an entire people had been expelled from its land.

Nor have we been successful in our subsequent goal of achieving a democratic Kosovo. Today, the Kosovars, restored to their land, are themselves riding it of Serbs and Gypsies under the very noses of nearly 6,000 American troops and 37,000 international peacekeepers. About three-quarters of Kosovo's prewar Serbian population of 200,000 has fled, and the remnant live under what a *Washington Post* reporter has called "a new apartheid." American and international troops are increasingly engaged in search-and-seizure missions against their former allies, the guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Having failed to stop the killing, we are proving unable to win the peace or to prevent a smaller, revenge-inspired ethnic cleansing.

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It could be argued, of course, that we did accomplish some good in Kosovo by saving lives and restoring refugees to their homes—a result the more impressive in that we stumbled into the war and then improvised on the fly. But our failures loom larger, and they are not completely traceable either to the fog of war or to the intractability of politics in the Balkans. The problem is more serious, and it lies in the constellation of ideas and assumptions that formed the backdrop of our military operation in Kosovo and of our efforts to find a lasting settlement there afterward.

In Kosovo, we were assured, we were fighting not for our national interest but selflessly, to save lives and promote democracy—we were fighting on behalf of humanity. Moreover, we were reminded, the campaign to push Serbia back was not being undertaken by us alone but with the multilateral cooperation of our European allies, and the effort to aid the Kosovars was similarly international in scope. Finally, we were instructed, we were fighting to establish in Kosovo a democratic and pluralist state.

Since this approach—which adds up to a contemporary variant of Wilsonian internationalism—has very nearly failed, and since we can be sure that there will be future instances in which we will wish to intervene to help innocents in faraway lands, it is incumbent on us to ask whether a more effective approach exists. The outlines of just such an approach have been sketched by William Kristol, David Brooks, and Robert Kagan in articles for the *Week-*

by *Standard* and the *Wall Street Journal*; by a number of contributors to COMMENTARY's January 2000 symposium, "American Power—For What?"; and by Senator John McCain during the Republican primaries.

What these voices have proposed is a more nationalistic, patriotic form of internationalism. Applied to Yugoslavia, this would have meant, above all, eschewing the cover of multilateralism in favor of using American ground troops from the start to control the Serbs in Kosovo, and securing for the Kosovars not simply autonomy but independence. Such a policy would have rejected the no-casualty mentality of the Clinton administration, and would have viewed the entire undertaking less as an act of philanthropy than as a test of American resolve and responsibility.

It is hardly without significance that those who have put forward this more assertive strategy frequently appeal to the figure of Theodore Roosevelt. McCain invoked TR in many of his stump speeches, and Kristol, Brooks, and Kagan have all but made him their exemplar. He is not a bad choice. On the one hand, TR advocated a muscular American role in the world, one that emphasized national honor and, to use his words, "the great fighting, masterful virtues." On the other hand, this unapologetic advocate of American power was, as his biographer John Milton Cooper has written, "the most visionary idealist in American politics." Against the doctrine of realism in foreign policy, TR maintained that one morality applied to individuals and states alike, and repeatedly affirmed his belief that righteousness and justice were more important than peace. As it happens, TR also played a crucial role in America's first quasi-humanitarian war, our intervention in Cuba in 1898, even taking part in the fighting.

But if Roosevelt's life and thought thus point toward an alternative to the Left's version of humanitarian intervention, one needs to know whether, today, the sorts of conditions obtain that might make intervention of this kind feasible. In learning from TR what is necessary for the success of the humanitarian endeavor, we may also discover whether we can, in fact, approximate his example.

II

FOR ROOSEVELT, humanitarian war was not only a matter of saving lives, as it is for today's liberals. It was also freighted with *political* content, and carried implications as much for domestic as for foreign policy. In Roosevelt's approach, perhaps the first requirement of humanitarianism was that

it be rooted in a vibrant patriotism—a patriotism that could alone supply an answer to the all-important question of *why* we should fight for others.

Roosevelt's understanding of the relationship between patriotism and humanitarianism was no doubt partly influenced by the Cuban crisis of 1898. Cuba had long been seeking independence from Spain, but without success, and with little support from the United States. But the view of the American public (and government) began to change when Spain cracked down on Cuban insurgents with its infamous policy of "reconcentration," herding Cubans (along with their livestock) into designated towns occupied by Spanish troops while forbidding the transportation of food from town to town. The result, most certainly intended, was widespread disease and starvation, a foretaste of the bloody century about to dawn—President McKinley went so far as to label it a policy of "extermination." The historian Ernest R. May believes that some 100,000 Cubans died; at the time, estimates ran as high as 400,000, or one-fourth of the island's population.

Obviously, our motives for intervening in Cuba were mixed. America had long had designs on the island, and the limited recognition we extended once the war was over demonstrates that we had more on our minds than humanitarian relief when we invaded; nor must one forget that conquest of the Philippines was also part of the Spanish-American war. Yet even as harsh a critic of American imperialism as the historian Charles Beard could later discern in that war "a new note . . . in American diplomacy, the note of moral obligation." More recently, the leftist political theorist Michael Walzer, in his *Just and Unjust Wars*, listed Cuba as one of only two identifiable instances of "mixed" humanitarian war (the other one being India's intervention in East Pakistan—Bangladesh—in 1971).

It was in the midst of the Cuban crisis that Theodore Roosevelt forged his singular combination of humanitarian sentiment and patriotic mission, one of whose touchstones was the need to employ means sufficient to accomplish our ends. Indeed, TR's patriotism might itself be seen in this light—that is, not simply as an end in itself (which it undoubtedly was) but also as a means to certain humanitarian objectives. As he would famously say during a later electoral season, "It would be a mistake to nominate me unless the country has in its mood something of the heroic—unless it feels not only devotion to ideals but the purpose measurably to realize those ideals in action."

The connection between patriotism and human-

itarianism was drawn explicitly by TR in an article published a few years before our Cuban intervention. Denouncing "milk-and-water cosmopolitanism," he compared patriotism to, of all things, monogamy in marriage:

Some reformers may urge that in the ages distant future, patriotism, like the habit of monogamous marriage, will become a needless and obsolete virtue; but just at present the man who loves other countries as much as he does his own is quite as noxious a member of society as the man who loves other women as much as he loves his wife. Love of country is an elemental virtue, like love of home. . . . The useful member of a community is the man who first and foremost attends to his own rights and his own duties, and who therefore becomes better fitted to do his share in the common duties of all. The useful member of the brotherhood of nations is that nation which is most thoroughly saturated with the national idea. . . .

TR was on to something here. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville had observed how, in democracies, "the bonds of human affection are wider but more relaxed," diminishing the willingness to make great sacrifices for great causes. For the spirit of sacrifice to flourish, stronger bonds were required. This was Roosevelt's insight as well: just as, in the case of the family, those stronger bonds arose out of the conventions and habits of monogamy, so in the case of humanitarian action it was patriotism that inspired individuals to put their lives on the line even when their immediate self-interest was not implicated.

For humanitarian war to succeed, TR believed, it must be undertaken in our own name and monogamously—that is, by a people who had cultivated a special attachment to their own; a philanderer was unlikely to be any more deeply committed to those he hardly knew than to those he knew well.

AND THAT brings us to a second requirement of humanitarianism in TR's conception of it: namely, the willingness to put one's life on the line, thus in effect answering the question of *who* would do the fighting. On this point, he wrote with characteristic bluntness, "I had very deeply felt that it was our duty to free Cuba, and I had publicly expressed this feeling; and when a man takes such a position, he ought to be willing to make his words good by his deeds unless there is some very strong reason to the contrary. He should pay with his body."

Thus, at age forty, TR volunteered for military ser-

vice, becoming a lieutenant-colonel in the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, eventually nicknamed the Rough Riders. In his book by that name, he writes that he drew many of his recruits from America's elite universities, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. These Rough Riders indeed "paid with their bodies": in 60 days of fighting, one-third of the officers and one-fifth of the men were killed or wounded.

Finally, there is the question of where and when to act, and on behalf of whom. "There are occasional crimes committed on so vast a scale and of such peculiar horror," TR wrote, that we will want at the very least to express our strong disapproval, at most to intervene. In his view, what distinguished such crimes was the repression or slaughter of entire classes of people, as opposed to individuals: for him, Spain's extermination of the Cubans, Russia's treatment of the Jews, and Turkey's oppression of the Armenians all fit that description. Although circumstance and context would determine where we intervened, our justification in such cases was certain.

But to this TR added a caution: when a country intervened on behalf of some group, it thereby became responsible for that group's actions and programs, for its subsequent deeds and misdeeds. This was another way of saying, again, that interventions, even those motivated by the purest of humanitarian impulses, always occur in a political context—a point pressed hard in the Cuban crisis by President Cleveland's Secretary of State, Richard Olney. Before granting recognition to the Cuban insurgents, Olney wanted certain questions answered. "Ascertain," he instructed an American diplomat in Cuba,

what sort of civil government and administration, if any, prevail in that large part of the island which is under the control of the insurgents. . . . Are there any elections of legislators or other civil officers? Is there any legislature which convenes and enacts laws? Are the insurgent forces under the control of any such civil government? What does this civil government, if any, do in the way of protecting life, liberty, and property? Has it established courts which are actually administering justice and whose judgments are executed by the ordinary civil processes? Does this civil government, if there is any, lay and collect taxes in accordance with general and special laws? Or is each military commander a law unto himself?

This was a remarkable list, the questions it asked perennially appropriate. It also went beyond what

TR himself would probably have demanded as a condition antecedent to action. As he well understood, there would always be occasions when we would want to aid an oppressed people regardless of what we had in common with them politically, and sometimes we might have no choice but to save lives first and ask questions later. Still, the questions themselves would never go away, even when the bloodletting ceased. We would need reassurance that our soldiers did not die in vain, that their lives were given in the name of *our* ideals of liberty and democracy. This would dictate that we be both careful about where we intervened and forceful about imposing our ideals when and where we did.

III

IS THEODORE Roosevelt's version of humanitarian war, or an approximation of it, today a "realizable ideal," to use one of his own phrases? To look again at the three conditions he stipulated for its success is to be filled with doubt.

To begin with, humanitarian war today is closely associated not with a defense but rather with a sharp critique of patriotism and indeed of nationalism. Thus Vaclav Havel, the president of the Czech Republic, celebrated the Kosovo intervention precisely on the grounds of its being unrelated to any one country's interests—a sentiment echoed by American liberals who favored intervention in Kosovo because our *own* interests were not at stake. In undertaking humanitarian missions, the Left tends to speak in terms of large abstractions—human rights, democracy, tolerance, or simply the humanitarian ideal itself—and to disdain arguments from American power and its responsibilities. Last December, for example, the *Washington Post* criticized Senator McCain's "brand of internationalism" as being too "forthright in celebrating American power," and complained (!) that the Senator "spoke in one breath of the 'interests of the United States and the rights of man.'"

To be sure, liberal humanitarians have been forced to notice that everywhere we have undertaken interventions in the name of their ideal—from Kosovo to Somalia to Bosnia—we have found ourselves wholly unwilling to match our means to our ends. In his new book, *Virtual War*, Michael Ignatieff wonders "why nations that have never been more immune from the risks of waging war should remain so unwilling to run them." William Shawcross, in *Deliver Us From Evil*, enunciates the same "uncomfortable paradox": "We want more [things] to be put right, but we are prepared to sacrifice less."

Though both authors take a stab at explaining the paradox, they do not see what would have been obvious to Theodore Roosevelt: namely, that humanitarianism without patriotism cannot succeed. For if patriotism is like marriage in encouraging us to make sacrifices and commitments we otherwise might not make, humanitarianism, by contrast, is akin to free love: it arises from impulses that, however natural, are indiscriminating and fleeting, and that end, as TR warned, in "the same tepid equality of emotion." That the present occupant of the White House should be both a great humanitarian *and* a great libertine would have been, for TR, undoubtedly a source of bitter humor. That he should also be a wildly popular President might have instilled graver worries still.

Which leads us to the issue of the willingness to put one's body on the line. Whatever we can say about today's volunteer army, we cannot say that the burden of the nation's defense is being equally shouldered by all. It is not just that the ranks are filled largely by the less educated and the less affluent, or that certain minorities, especially blacks and Hispanics, are disproportionately represented. The problem goes deeper still. As Thomas E. Ricks has documented in *Making the Corps*, a vast and growing cultural divide separates the military from the civilian populace.

Many of our elite colleges and universities actively nourish an antimilitary sensibility. Decades ago, many of these same schools, in protest against the Vietnam war, forced officer-training programs from their campuses, never to let them return; others keep them off today because of the military's policy regarding homosexuals. No less ominously, the gulf between civil and military cultures is also felt in government, where increasing numbers of officials and elected leaders have had no military experience. Yet these are the very same elites who tend to favor humanitarian interventions and wars—interventions and wars to be fought by others. The separation that now prevails between the civil and military leadership guarantees a schizophrenic foreign policy that cannot agree either on its objectives or its means, emboldening us to talk loudly while using a small stick.

Finally, there is the when and the where, and the for whom. On this point, at least, today's liberal humanitarians would agree with TR that we are justified in acting when entire classes of people are targeted for repression or slaughter. Indeed, President Clinton said as much when he proclaimed to "the people of the world" that if a state sought to wipe out large numbers of innocent civilians based

on their race or religion, the United States would intervene on their behalf. But of course, as Kosovo demonstrated, things are rarely so simple.

Certainly, the vast majority of Kosovars who were subjected to harassment and worse were innocent civilians, and their crisis was a humanitarian one. But the Kosovars also had political objectives and ambitions of their own. Most Kosovars, and certainly their political leadership in the KLA, wanted an independent Kosovo ruled by themselves—something they continue to press for today by means of political intimidation and violence. We, on the other hand, stood and have continued to stand against independence and for a multicultural society. Vice President Gore has said that in Kosovo “there must be a genuine recognition of and respect for difference. . . . [and] then . . . a transcendence of difference.” To Bernard Kouchner of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, “the best way forward” in Kosovo is “to create a tolerant and open society where everyone’s rights are respected, regardless of ethnic or religious background, and where all groups can participate in government, business, the arts, and education.”

These are fine goals, but they are ours, not those of the Kosovars—which means that eventually we will either have to accept the political ambitions of the Kosovars for a monocultural, independent nation or we will have to transform their political psychology, teaching them to value diversity and religious toleration. The first option—an independent Kosovo purged of non-Albanians—is unacceptable to most liberal humanitarians. As for the second, liberal humanitarians, and hardly they alone, are temperamentally unsuited to the neo-imperialistic (and admittedly gargantuan) task of remaking an entire political culture. Thus we float in a no-man’s land, insisting upon respect for diversity and ethnic comity but, trapped in part by our relativistic tolerance for different ways of life, lacking the will to impose it.

IV

HENRY KISSINGER contended not long ago that TR’s “approach to international affairs died with him in 1919.” Whether or not Kissinger’s dating is correct, it is hard not to agree with the truth of his dictum today.

Both the cosmopolitan or internationalist Left and the postmodern Left view American patriotism not as a force for good but as a form of ethnocentrism, and a particularly malignant form at that. As the philosopher Richard Rorty has rightly observed

of his colleagues on the Left: “They often become convinced that they live in a violent, inhuman, corrupt country. They begin to think of themselves as a saving remnant—as the happy few who have the insight to see through nationalist rhetoric to the ghastly reality of contemporary America.” These are also the advocates of identity politics and multiculturalism, of ethnic and gender studies, of quotas and racial gerrymandering. How a balkanized America can bring peace to the Balkans or anywhere else is a mystery. And how elites who reject universalism at home can assert it abroad is entirely unclear.

But what about conservatives? Most of them, after all, have a considerably more favorable (and considerably more accurate) picture of their country. Nevertheless, their patriotism, and their sense of the national interest, are pinched. When William Kristol and David Brooks put forward their TR-inspired program of American greatness, the business and libertarian wings of the Republican party recoiled in horror at its big-government implications. For their part, some religious conservatives have accused Kristol, Brooks, and Kagan of indulging in a pagan form of state-worship. Most Republicans simply yawned.

Under the circumstances, the conclusion is inescapable that our country is not ready for humanitarian war. Is this to say that it will never be ready? One small but hopeful sign of change is the movement on some elite campuses—Harvard being a notable example—to bring ROTC back; even more heartening is the fact that this move is being spearheaded by undergraduates themselves. (At Harvard, where 51 percent of students support the return of ROTC, the undergraduate council voted last year for its restoration, only to have the administration reject the vote.) Then, too, with the end of the cold war, at least some on the Left have dropped their strident and reflexive anti-Americanism. Finally, if the McCain phenomenon proved anything, it is that patriotism is not dead in America, and that, the *Washington Post* notwithstanding, many Americans see nothing at all wrong in speaking “in one breath of the ‘interests of the United States and the rights of man.’”

In short, humanity’s cause is likely to have a future with us on the day when more Americans come to believe that upholding this cause is a matter of their special national honor. Bringing that day closer is a task for leadership, cultural and intellectual as much as political. Until then, our humanitarian interventions—such as they are, such as they have become—will continue to be marred by inconsistencies, inconsequentiality, and, possibly, worse.

Tales of My Great-Grandfathers

Johanna Kaplan

ONE MORNING in the clamorous early 70's—that hectic, electric time of Flower Power, angry demonstrations, saffron-clad gurus and their chanting, shaven-headed acolytes—one morning, waiting for a New York City bus in that gaudy, psychedelic time, I ran into a woman with whom I had gone to high school and college. The daughter of artists, she had grown up in sophisticated Greenwich Village, while I, a teacher's daughter, had emerged from the subway provinces.

We had not ever really been friends, Mara and I; still, we knew each other and had many acquaintances in common. So, standing there together, waiting for the bus, we fell into an uneasy early-morning exchange. All too quickly, though, we exhausted the juiciest gossipy good stuff and an edgy silence overtook us, until suddenly my old schoolmate—who was at that juncture, she had just informed me, a member of a women's guerrilla street-theater troupe—said: “You know, I was just thinking about you recently. In my consciousness-raising group. . . .” And then, very guardedly, “You were like really always into being Jewish, weren't you?”

“I guess so.” I said this with reluctance, immediately feeling defensive.

Because in a time of so much ferment and ecsta-

tic disruption, who could believe it? Hear about Johanna? Pathetic, really—still into her same old boring *Jewish* trip. But this, it turned out, was not at all what she had in mind. What I did not know, and would never have guessed, was that Mara herself was even then inching her way toward reclaiming a Jewish inheritance she had been raised to disdain. On that long-ago morning, as she stood peering down the yet-to-be gentrified Upper West Side street for a glimpse of the bus, she carefully avoided my eyes as she finally blurted out, “What did you—I mean, how did you get *into* it?”

But the bus was at long last arriving, and I took incoherent refuge in rummaging for my fare. “Oh well, you know . . . my parents,” was all I managed to summon up before we climbed on and became separated by the determined stream of onrushing passengers.

As it happens, Mara would eventually find her way to an unfamiliar and decidedly not home-inspired sense of Jewish belonging by way of *klezmer* music. You just never know: Jewish destiny is a great mystery, said the illustrious Rav Kook, Israel's first chief rabbi. So for Mara, the world at large, or the zeitgeist, filled in the blanks, and she did not need what should have been my answer. But it is also true that, decades ago, though I surely could have offered her at least a few surface details—for instance, that my grandfather had been a cantor, that I was raised in a moderately observant but specifically Zionist family, and that my intense ado-

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lescent years of membership in the Zionist youth movement Habonim were precious and formative—I would have been incapable of formulating the deeper, more elusive answer that Mara’s poignant baffled plea, “How did you get *into* it?,” deserved.

I think now that every family has its significant myths, its agglomerations of told and re-told stories, memories, and experiences, and that these myths, even as they may diverge from literal truth or documentable historical facts, lay out a felt but invisible path, a subterranean template that defines and sometimes even determines—if you will, a kind of barely traceable spiritual DNA. Because these myths are the very air we breathe in childhood, we tend to take them for granted, to be a little bored with them—they can seem foolish, even embarrassing—so that it becomes impossible for us to recognize what makes them, after all, our *own*, unique or remarkable. Perhaps it is only later, with life’s perplexing turns and middle age’s apprehension of the shocking flight of time, that they come back to us in new and sharpened focus.

In my own family, I might have told Mara, the formative myths arose from the very different life stories of two of my great-grandfathers. I call them the Tale of the Great Rabbi and the Tale of the Simple Jew.

The Tale of the Great Rabbi

USUALLY, STORIES about great rabbis—and nearly every Jewish family has one, somewhere—center on their singular wisdom and prodigious learning. Not so for my mother’s grandfather, Rabbi Jacob Meir of Minsk: in his case, the family stories were about his austere, remote, otherworldly aspect and character, and his countless (if sometimes highly peculiar) good deeds. This improbable combination—*Twilight Zone* manner and one-man social-service-agency activity—is said to have inspired awe in the surrounding *gubernya*, or district, and to have led some, Jews and Gentiles alike, to attribute to him nearly magical powers, though he was most definitely *not* a “wonder” rabbi, *not* a Hasid. “Reb Jacob Meir of Minsk, a saintly *Mitnaged*” (or anti-Hasid), is how he is characterized by Zalman Shazar, Israel’s third president, in his autobiography, *Morning Stars*. How Shazar in particular came to regard him as saintly is something I’ll return to, but first let me provide a taste of the stories I grew up on.

Before the Sabbath—every Sabbath—Rabbi Jacob Meir would not only empty out the pockets of

his coat in order to give whatever money he had to the needy, he would actually give away his coat. When the members of his congregation remonstrated with him about this highly idiosyncratic practice, he would say only, “God will provide.” But clearly it was those same congregants who would each time be obliged to provide, and though this exemplary story would always, in childhood, fill me with a terrible *frisson*—how reckless and unnatural to give away your brand-new coat!—it is apparent to me now that my great-grandfather’s famously remote gaze harbored a surprising shrewdness. However his congregation might guiltily begrudge its numerous coatless poor, it could hardly deny its own rabbi.

But here is a more substantial story. Scattered throughout the *gubernya* of Minsk were children known as Rabbi Jacob Meir’s *mamzerim*, bastards. Who were they? When a woman had a baby she knew she could not keep—in telling this story, my mother, mindful of my sheltered, childish ears, would always suggest extreme poverty as the reason for the woman’s dilemma (though she sometimes darkly murmured, “Or who knows?”)—the anguished new mother would bring the baby to my great-grandfather’s house. He became godfather to these infants, each of whom he would place with a family in one or another of the surrounding shtetls. The given-away children would bear the last names of the families who raised them, but to each distraught birth mother my great-grandfather pledged that he would personally watch over the education and development of her child, that he would always consider himself to be bonded with that child—to remain forever as a special presence. And these were not mere empty consolatory words: my grandmother grew up knowing some of these children and regarded them as semi-cousins.

In one instance, the dynamic of this special relationship was to take a dramatic twist. In the turbulent early days of the new Bolshevik government, a nephew of my great-grandfather’s, a pharmacist, was arrested and thrown in jail for “economic crimes”—I suppose he had his own little store, and as such was regarded as a bourgeois parasite. His prospects looked exceedingly grim until my great-grandfather thought to seek the help of one of his *mamzerim*, who had grown up to become first a fervent revolutionary and then, rising very quickly, a local commissar. The newly minted commissar sprung the hapless pharmacist and hurriedly arranged for him and his young family to get to Warsaw, where they could take up a new life. (But in the 20th century, too many Jewish stories did not have

happy endings. So, lucky once, but only once: the Warsaw pharmacist and his family were to perish during World War II in the Warsaw Ghetto.)

Perhaps the strangest, most legend-like story I heard in childhood about this great-grandfather refers back to czarist times, when an extremely onerous tax on kosher meat was levied against the Jewish community. So burdensome was its effect that my great-grandfather went to the local czarist official to plead that it be rescinded. Denying him even the most minimal courtesy, the official peremptorily refused. The next day, that man's young son fell ill—so ill that it appeared the boy would die. At this, the father became convinced that his harsh dealings with the Jews and specifically with Jacob Meir were the cause of his misfortune. The official rescinded the tax; his child recovered; and from then on, rumors began to spread among the local peasantry about Rabbi Jacob Meir's powers.

But what did my great-grandfather himself regard as the most important undertaking of his life? The curious answer to this question I learned only from reading Shazar's memoir. It was Jacob Meir's firm belief that the *geulah*, the long-awaited redemption of the Jews, could never come about as long as there was a chance that the holy name of God might be "trodden underfoot . . . whenever a page of an ordinary *siddur* [prayer book] or *humash* [Pentateuch] fell on the floor." What did he do? Writes Shazar: "Very carefully, . . . he had [typeset] pages of a *siddur* where the letters of the Name were scattered and printed on a slant, so that even if the page became loose and dropped out there would be no desecration."

To raise money for the printing of these special volumes, Rabbi Jacob Meir went from shtetl to shtetl, escorted to the homes of the wealthy by local *heder* (religious primary school) boys who were judged capable of appreciating the significance of his mission. And that is how a very young Zalman Shazar came to encounter my great-grandfather, and ultimately, to offer the only physical description of him that I know: "a tall, thin old man wearing a black velvet hat and a long robe that reached to the top of his shoes; he walked along with me, splashing in the mud, while his lean, yellowish hand shielded his eyes to keep him from looking at that forbidden sight—a woman."

Now, there is no way, today, that you can look over a photocopied page from that bizarrely set *siddur*, as I did only recently—a giddy, nearly Expressionistic swirl of Hebrew letters swooning before your eyes like the guilty, fevered visions of a dying,

errant Jew—without immediately acceding to the darkest suspicions about at least one thread in the psychic component of your own genetic makeup. How, then, can a rational contemporary mind make sense of so deeply premodern a preoccupation? For myself, I have reached the conclusion that to my great-grandfather, the world-to-come was at least as real as the muddy roads he splashed through daily. He believed absolutely what he read every Sabbath in the rabbinic treatise, *Ethics of the Fathers*: "This world is a vestibule before the world-to-come; prepare yourself in the vestibule so that you may enter the banquet hall."

So totally did he believe this that when his daughter, my great-aunt, decided she wanted to go to medical school in Moscow, it never dawned on him to forbid or discourage her, even though the only way a Jewish girl could get the requisite identity permit to live in Moscow was by allowing herself to be declared a prostitute. What difference could it make to Rabbi Jacob Meir: what was all this anyway but the vestibule? When his outraged *balabatim*, his money men, stormed to his door to protest such a shocking prospect—their rabbi's daughter, bearing the papers of a prostitute?—and even threatened to fire him if he did not change his mind, he gave them this reply: "She will go to Moscow; she will become a doctor; she will serve her people." And she did just that, my stern-faced great-aunt. She left Russia for Palestine to become the doctor for a company of pioneers who were draining the swamps of the Huleh valley.

At his death, the family story had it, Jacob Meir was given a state funeral by the local Soviet government, and was hailed as "the rabbi of the people," ostensibly because of his lifelong devotion to the welfare of the poor. And although this was true—and although it was also true that, contrary to the usual rabbinic practice, he had never accepted money for resolving ritual disputes—the family myth held that the real reason for his state funeral lay in the profound superstition of the local peasant populace and their age-old fear of offending the spirit of the powerful dead.

The Tale of the Simple Jew

THERE ARE no literary accounts of my father's grandfather. In fact I do not even know his first name, though my guess is that it would have been Joseph—Yosef, Yussl—since that was the name of my own father's eldest brother, my grandfather's first-born son. What I do know was that his last name, my original family name, was not Kaplan.

Was this change in our family name the peremptory doing of some ignorant Ellis Island immigration clerk? Far from it: my great-grandfather never came close to leaving Russia. His story is much darker. His entire life's trajectory was defined by a particularly horrific episode of child persecution in Russian Jewish history that is not particularly well known. My great-grandfather was a cantonist.

This strange-sounding designation—it has nothing to do with any religious or political splinter group, but a devil's detour from childhood—was the brainstorm of Czar Nicholas I, who, like a latter-day Haman, had conceived a specific plan to rid his realm of Jews. This was the so-called Plan of the Thirds, according to whose design one-third of Russian Jewry would be compelled to emigrate, one third would die of starvation, and one third would be forcibly converted to Christianity. It was in brutal pursuit of that last third that my great-grandfather's fate was sealed.

At the age of seven, he was ripped from his family in a Lithuanian shtetl, swooped away from his birthright life among Jews, kidnapped by the dreaded *khapers*—snatchers—and transported, along with other seized, impoverished little *beder* boys like himself, to a remote, frigid outpost of the Russian empire. Officially, all these captured, terrorized, often sickened small boys, abruptly thrust from their mothers' arms into stiff soldiers' overcoats, were made lifetime conscripts in the czar's army, and in that guise were housed in army barracks called cantonments (hence: cantonists). In those dismal precincts, they were subjected to the harshest military discipline and relentlessly tortured to give up every vestige of their Jewish lives—robbed of their ritual fringed garments, forbidden to pray, prohibited from speaking Yiddish, and, finally, the true goal, forced to perform the rituals of the Russian Orthodox church. These were small children after all. How hard could it have been? Any who resisted were starved till they acquiesced or died.

So, though this was not ever part of the family myth, to me it is clear, from my reading, that my great-grandfather must at some point have submitted to baptism. What *was* told to me was that, from the age of seven, he had spent his entire childhood on a frozen, isolated waste of a farm in Siberia, in servitude to a peasant family that required him to do their foulest, filthiest, most back-breaking work. And here the *Encyclopedia Judaica* confirms the family account: "The cantonists were sometimes sent to Russian farmsteads in remote villages where they performed exhausting labor and were forced to

change their faith." In other words, he was a slave—an isolated, forcibly baptized, brutalized child slave.

But maybe, just maybe, that harrowing reality was something he could in some inchoate sense recognize—even hang on to—as a measure of spiritual resistance. After all, it had happened before: *avadiim hayinu*, "We were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt." Through all those lonely years, did he retain—could he have retained—from some dim corner of another life, the memory of a seder table? Or was it perhaps the hazy echo of a buzzing *beder* bench where he'd studied the Book of Exodus? "We were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt. And the Lord delivered us from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." Because something, surely, did sustain him. Through years of howling Arctic blasts and blinding blizzards, he remained a stubborn, solitary child Marrano—and one who was denied even the Marrano's small solace of occasionally-glimpsed secret brothers somewhere in his environs.

AT THE age of eighteen, eleven years after his kidnapping, he began his mandatory 25 years of duty in the czar's regular army. He was forty-three, then, when he was finally released, his sole, unlikely possession in the world a plot of land in Siberia, given him in return for his service to the czar. After 36 years, at last delivered into freedom, what could he have been by that time but an odd, remote, rough, uncommunicative man? Decades of military rigors, numberless privations, involuntary servitude, and confused, hidden identity had ensured that he had missed just about every ratified stage of normal human development. Yet out of that prolonged nightmare half-life at the ends of the empire, he made his way back to the shtetl of his birth in Kovno *gubernya*, there to request a bride.

And who could she have been, my great-grandmother, but a penniless orphan girl, utterly without prospects, to have accepted a match with a strange, hardened old soldier who barely spoke Yiddish, who had had no bar-mitzvah, known no calendar of Sabbaths, fast days, and festivals, let alone any ordinary family tenderness or communal nurture? Who else could she have been to find herself under the *huppah*, tearily bedecked, circling seven times around a groom who would promptly take her off to, of all places, Siberia?

But in Kayinsk, Siberia, there was, as it turned out, a small community of other released cantonists who had retained their Jewishness—enough for a prayer quorum, enough to form a tiny congregation, the *Soldatski Synagog*. There, in remote Kay-

insk—a place so cold that a party of determined visiting cousins were discovered frozen to death in nearby woods en route—my own grandfather was born, and did become bar-mitzvah. And when, as a young man, this grandfather of mine set off on his own long-planned journey from Kayinsk, Siberia to New York harbor, ship's passage clasped hard in hand, he, too, traveled first to his father's birthplace in Kovno *gubernya*, there, hurriedly, to gain a bride: my grandmother, the undowered orphan daughter of an itinerant cooper-smith.

And the name? Well, in fact, Kaplan was the name of a rich boy—a boy whose father's resources had ransomed him out of the dreaded schoolboy conscription. Was he perhaps the pink-cheeked pampered son of a grain merchant, the honey-licking firstborn of a timber dealer? I'll never know. I only know that shoved in under the name Kaplan in his stead was my luckless, destitute great-grandfather.

Still, I had always assumed—it was the family myth—that Kaplan's bribe had been paid to the czarist officials. Not so: on this point, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* provides a highly disturbing correction. It was the Jewish communal authority, the *kehilla*, that was compelled to furnish the quota of conscript *heder* boys; it was the *kehilla* that made up the list, and a member of the *kehilla*, a Jew, who would have accepted the bribe, and consigned a helpless, expendable child into the pit of oblivion. A little uncanny, then, that my great-grandfather should have been named Joseph. Like that Joseph in the book of Genesis—the Joseph whose story is the prelude to the Passover saga of redemption—he, too, had been bundled into slavery by his own brothers, his own people.

But they *were* his people still. That he never forgot this, but clung to it with all his might to survive and prevail as a Jew against the grimmest of odds—in itself an amazement—is surely the luminous lesson of his haunting, impenetrable life.

WHEN I think now about these two disparate family myths that made up the household hum of my childhood, I am struck by their odd, asymmetric link. I am the great-granddaughter at once of an eccentric, lofty-minded rabbi who rescued abandoned children and of a desolate, kidnapped child-conscript whom no one in his community ever made the smallest attempt to save. How could I not, then, as a writer, be drawn to the paradoxes and disruptions that stumble through generations of Jewish families' lives? How could I not be preoccupied, in my fiction, with the terrible deforming power of history's privations when I know that its remnant anachronistic tendrils are still so alive within me?

Yet these myths have another link—and one that I gleaned very early: the primacy of peoplehood. So even though I cannot, with my rabbi great-grandfather, negotiate the day-to-day world as if it were a mere waiting room for the Redemption, I am sufficiently inhabited by both family tales to cling, with bemused intensity, and under conditions of ease my cantonist great-grandfather could never have begun to apprehend, to a complicated, vexing people. Somewhere, among their ancient, unlikely dreams and farfetched adventures toward fulfillment, lies my own ineluctable walk-on in a drama of catastrophe and renewal any imaginative writer would be hard put to equal.

OBSERVATIONS

Prozac, with Knife

Joseph Epstein

IMAGINE TYLER and Kelly Tucker—as I like to think of them—on the first night of their honeymoon, in a glow of happy confidence that sets a mood for postcoital intimacies. Tyler opens by confessing to his bride that his thick hair is the result, partly, of hair plugs, implanted three years before he met her. Kelly admits in turn that her high cheekbones, which Tyler has so often remarked upon, are the consequence of silicone injections. He allows that, at age sixteen, he rid himself, through surgery, of the aquiline Tucker nose. She confides that her once weak chin has been augmented, her front teeth are capped, and six of her back teeth are implants. Finally he shares the news of his penile enlargement. Her breasts, she whispers back, have likewise been enlarged, her thighs and bottom reduced through liposuction. In a swoon of candor they embrace—though Tyler, a former fat boy, has still to divulge his tummy tuck.

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"Beauty fades," says the character played by Albert Brooks in *I'll Do Anything*, bemoaning his weakness for knock-out young women. Then he adds, "but it fades so slowly." Not slowly enough, apparently, for the Americans, Europeans, Latin Americans, and Israelis who have been going in for plastic surgery in continually larger numbers. The statistics on these procedures—also known as cosmetic surgery, less frequently as aesthetic surgery—show them to comprise a flourishing business. In *Making the Body Beautiful*,* Sander L. Gilman, a professor at the University of Chicago, reports that from 1981 to 1984, the number of such surgeries in the United States rose from 296,000 to 477,700. By 1995, 825,000 operations were being performed on the face alone—quite apart from procedures to lift the skin of the upper arm; breast work (implantations, reductions, removal of earlier, faulty implants); buttock and thigh lifts; tummy tucks; liposuctions of various sorts; calf and other implants; foreskin reconstitutions; penile enlargements and implantations; and—the ultimate surgical alteration—sex-change operations.

Plastic surgery—from the Greek *plastikos*, meaning "fit for molding"—has, we learn from Gilman, a long history. The 7th-century Alexandrian physician Paulus of Aegina thought that the growth of breasts in men was something to be dealt with surgically. Later, surgery was called upon to camouflage wounds incurred in dueling or warfare, or to hide the depredations of advanced syphilis on facial bones, particularly the loss of cartilage in the nose. Surgeons also did their best through the centuries to undo nature's dirty tricks—repairing cleft palates, constructing missing body parts, reducing hideously outsized organs and appendages. But it was during and after World War I, when physicians worked to reconstruct faces destroyed in combat, that plastic surgery obtained its best press. This may also have been the last time it was not bogged down in the swamps of controversy.

The first of these controversies had to do with whether plastic surgery strictly qualifies as medicine, especially when its intentions are purely cosmetic. If the patient seeks

* Princeton, 544 pp., \$29.95.

the treatment, decides what is needed, and then is the chief judge of its success, is this really medicine? Plastic surgeons themselves used to worry over such questions, and in the first decades of the 20th century many refused to take on cases that they deemed trivial or requests for reasons that went no deeper than vanity.

But help was at hand by the 1920's with the widespread publicity given to the psychiatrist Alfred Adler's notion of the inferiority complex. The important word here is "complex," implying that feelings of inferiority are unnatural, an aberration, needing to be altered, cured, or . . . cut away. (The alternative, of convincing individuals that they really are inferior, and hence relieving them of the burden of carrying around a complex, has apparently never been tried.) Thus, cosmetic surgeons soon found themselves able to say that they were not only performing surgery but supplying therapy. With a cut here, a bob there, they combined the work of a sawbones with that of a shrink, turning a sad person—a person with too large a nose, a weak chin, big ears, a squint—into a happy person. In effect, they were supplying Prozac, but with a knife.

Leaving aside the recent scandal over the possible consequences of silicone breast implants, physicians doing cosmetic surgery probably feel rather better about their work today than ever before. Cosmetic surgery is even creeping into other branches of medicine: dermatologists, for example, have begun doing skin peels, collagen injections, and liposuctions. A physician I see told me recently that if he had his medical career to plan over again, he would be a cosmetic surgeon. The work requires artistry, it makes most clients quite happy, and it is profitable: an eastside Manhattan facelift from a swank practitioner might run, with all the extras—consultation fee, nursing, anesthesia, recovery hotel—somewhere near \$20,000.

The profit most often comes in the form of cash on the barrelhead. Since insurance companies reimburse only that portion of the surgery that is truly reconstructive or directly related to health, much of the usual bureaucratic-financial headache connected with the practice of medicine is eliminated. Fees are paid up front, which does away with bill collecting and also prevents unsatisfied customers from withholding payment (though a few have returned to murder their surgeons, causing many nowadays to screen for potential maniacs). As for patients who go to law to complain about the quality of the surgery they have received, juries tend to be most unsympathetic, viewing them as members of two vaguely but genuinely despised groups: the pathetically vain and the antipathetically wealthy.

VANITY ASIDE, what is cosmetic surgery really about? In my high school in Chicago—this is going back 40 years or more—a small but not negligible number of girls had already begun to have their noses done. "Done" invariably meant shortened, often made retroussé, or slightly upturned. Different surgeons conferred different looks: I seem to remember something called a Becker nose being popular in Chicago; in New York during those same years, Long Island girls went to a cosmetic surgeon named Howard Diamond to acquire a Diamond. A few among these girls claimed they needed to have an operation because a "deviated septum" was giving them trouble breathing. Most, of course, simply disliked the shape of their noses sufficiently to undergo the pain and general unpleasantness—they would show up at school with blackened eyes and vast quantities of tape across the middle of their faces—required to change it.

The younger sister of a close friend of mine in those days had a distinctly non-Beckerian nose. Like her mother's, it was slightly aquiline and with flared nostrils—clearly, as

the old anti-Semites had it, one of the chosen noses. She also had an attractive shyness, a slight holding-back of herself that I found winning but that may well have been traceable in part to her unhappiness with her looks. At fifteen, she had her nose fixed. The operation was an almost unqualified success, definitively solving the problem of both aquilinity and—as writers on the subject call it—nostrility. Now altered by the knife, my friend's sister descended into the great adolescent female herd of the merely cute, losing, so far as I could determine, all distinctiveness whatsoever. Yet, I have no doubt, she was happier.

What this suggests is that cosmetic surgery is "about" the specific form of happiness that can accompany passing: becoming invisible by melting into the mass. Not that passing is necessarily the same thing as hiding out altogether. My friend's sister, for example, certainly did not want to de-Judaize herself—her name was Jewish, she went on to marry a Jewish man and bring up her children as Jews. She only wanted a face that more closely conformed to the then-prevailing American standard of beauty. In the 1960's, the ideal American nose was said to belong to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis. Study of that famous appendage—small, short, just slightly upturned—reveals no oddity or distinction of any kind. And that is just the point: it was a nose that gave no clues to origin, no hostages to ethnic identity.

Passing can take many forms. Some people wish to escape or elide their ethnic or even racial heritage: Asian girls, for example, who want western eyes. Others (John Dillinger is the famous example here) may wish to avoid detection by the cops. Some wish to add to their erotic cargo, which is what breast implants are about. Others—these days, they are the majority—wish to seem younger than they are. And some, as with the singer Michael Jackson's estimated 31 operations, may not be

quite sure what they are after but are confident that, in one way or another, cosmetic surgery will alter their lives for the better.

And it may well do so. Most studies report that handsome or beautiful men and women tend to do better in the job market and also—golly, Mom, wouldya believe it?—tend more easily to find partners for sex. Beauty is a quality, noted Montaigne in the 16th century, “that gives power and advantage”; to Aristotle, it was “a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction.” True, in certain circles beauty can come under suspicion: I once heard two great scholars—the historian Arnaldo Momigliano and the social scientist Edward Shils—discuss in perfect earnestness how a graduate student’s handsomeness seemed to suggest an incapacity for serious scholarship. Still, given the choice, most of us would undoubtedly prefer to come into the world beautiful, and most of us are also likely to have at least one unbeautiful physical quality that we feel may have held us back from the greater triumphs that were surely meant to be ours. Are not such flaws more costly to us than the price of eliminating them through cosmetic surgery?

Not that most people who enter into such surgery do so wholly without trepidation. A piece of flesh, after all, is hardly a piece of cake, and the literature is strewn if not with corpses then with post-operatively misshapen or malfunctioning body parts. There are women whose skin becomes stretched so tight from facelifts that they cannot close their eyes at night, or from whose faces the makeup slides off. There are women with silicone inserted in their cheeks in the hope of attaining the look of Audrey Hepburn who, when the silicone falls, end up looking more like Alvin the chipmunk. There are the noses that emerge snouty, the lips that curl or fall to one side, the scarring, the infections, the long-term slippage

that, over time, needs to be redone, the occasional death.

Consider lipoplasty, better known as liposuction and employed to bring about what were once called “contour improvements” by vacuuming or sucking out fat from the face and neck, abdomen and flanks, thighs, hips, knees, calves. Because licensing laws are unclear in some states, and nonexistent in others, incompetent practitioners—not to say outright quacks—can never be ruled out. But even under good conditions, and in good hands, serious screw-ups can occur. In *The Unofficial Guide to Cosmetic Surgery*, E. Bingo Wyer notes that “In all forms of lipoplasty, . . . too great a loss of fat can result in a rumpled or unbalanced appearance, which can be difficult to correct.” She then adds a brief but horrific list of possible side effects, including pain, bleeding, temporary numbness, excessive fluid buildup, clots that block the flow of blood, infection, shock. In *Lift*, an account of her own “brow lift, nose nip, secondary face-lift, and lip peel,” the journalist Joan Kron mentions matter-of-factly the post-operative removal of “fifteen or twenty annoying metal staples used to close the incision in the back of my head.” A routine matter, this—and yet, one cannot help thinking, maybe it isn’t merely not nice but not too smart to try to fool Mother Nature.

BUT PEOPLE do continue to try. For one thing, new techniques keep being invented and put into practice. For another, fashions change. Rhinoplasty (nose jobs) has dropped off in recent years—although some people, no longer shamed by their ethnicity, are going *back* to their cosmetic surgeons to have their old bumps or beakishness returned. The notion of “passing” has itself passed from the wish to seem normal, or invisible, or WASPish, to the wish, mainly, to seem young. Facelifts, along with eye- and brow-lifts and various skin peels (collagen and Botox injections, dermabrasion, la-

ser resurfacing), lead all other forms of cosmetic surgery today.

And what is wrong with the wish to remain youthful-looking? Medical technology has given us a great gift, one that enables us to fight off, for as long as possible, nature’s slow, inexorable onslaught, to cheat that great sculptor, Time. If we want to make ourselves seem younger and therefore (by our own lights) happier, and can afford the cost, why not?

One answer is that heredity and time—or, if one prefers, the heavens and fate—deal us a much more interesting hand than doctors can ever hope to do. Think, in all its immense variety, of the nose: from Gogol’s long sharp proboscis to Tolstoy’s potato nose to W. C. Fields’s empurpled lighthouse nose to Jimmy Durante’s two-pound cucumber nose to Igor Stravinsky’s isosceles-triangle nose to Bob Hope’s ski-jump nose to Barbra Streisand’s grand depressed-tip, sloping-septum nose. Interesting faces, oddly beautiful faces, are not created by surgeons, no matter how skillful, but by the years, working in conjunction with character. Who would have wished to subject the rhinohide face of the older W. H. Auden to a face-lift, or to change in any way the countenance of the novelist Marguerite Yourcenar, with its strong lines, shadows, dark nostrils, sagging eyelids, and more than a hint of a mustache?

Novelists have long depended on the relation of physiognomy to character; Balzac speaks with pity of people who have not yet learned to read moral character in a face. And if beauty, as the cliché has it, is in the eye of the beholder, here is the twenty-six-year-old Henry James, the subtlest of beholders, writing home to his father after meeting the English novelist George Eliot:

To begin with she is magnificently ugly—deliciously hideous. She has a low forehead, a dull gray eye, a vast pendulous nose, a huge mouth, full of uneven teeth and a chin and jaw-bone

qui n'en finissent pas. . . . Now in this vast ugliness resides a most powerful beauty which, in a very few minutes, steals forth and charms the mind, so that you end as I ended, in falling in love with her. Yes behold me literally in love with this great horse-faced blue-stockings. I don't know in what the charm lies, but it is thoroughly potent.

This suggests a philosophical question for cosmetic surgeons: does a change in one's body bring about a corresponding change in one's moral character? And if so, can we be sure it is for the better? In his introduction to a 1937 book titled *New Faces, New Futures: Rebuilding Character with Plastic Surgery*, Alfred Adler answered in the affirmative: after such surgery, "the personality relaxes into naturalness and character is transformed." But one may be permitted to doubt this. Even, it turns out, radical feminists do. Fifty years after Adler, a writer in *Ms.* confessed, "Before the

operation I rationalized how I wanted my face-lift so my exterior would match my interior. . . . I realize now I was lying to myself. I just wanted to look younger and prettier."

I am not sure that George Orwell was correct when he claimed that at fifty a man gets the face he deserves, but at sixty, I can attest, he tends to get reconciled to it. I look in the mirror and consider my ample, stick-out ears; my mottled complexion, with a beard that confers a five o'clock shadow sometime past noon; the impressive bags—two-suiters—under my eyes, which go so nicely with the sag that has shown up in my right eyelid; the slightly off-center circumflexes that my eyebrows have begun to form; the strong downward lines running from alongside the bridge of my nose to the top of my upper lip; the fairly recent addition of two further lines, running from the corners of my lower lip down to my jaw, giving my mouth the look of a ventril-

quist's dummy and a not-so-gentle hint of pervasive depression. A face, clearly, begging for the knife. Yet, just as clearly, it is not going to get it: for I have grown accustomed to this face, a poor thing but mine own.

From both limited personal acquaintance and photographs in various books on the subject, I have noticed that cosmetic surgeons are not themselves a notably handsome bunch; yet most do not seem to have done anything about it. Why not, when the remedy is so obviously and easily and literally at hand? An old joke about psychoanalysts is that, after conferences in Vienna, they get drunk together and sing, "I want a girl/just like the girl/that married dear old dad." Can it be that cosmetic surgeons begin each day by crooning into their mirrors: "But don't change a hair for me/Not if you care for me/Stay, little Valentine, stay"? I would like to think so, at least for a few happily cynical souls among them.

MUSIC

The Real Stravinsky

Terry Teachout

FOR A long time, Igor Stravinsky was widely considered to be the 20th century's greatest composer. *Le Sacre du printemps* ("The Rite of Spring"), his best-known score, was credited with having pulled down the pillars of romanticism—the 1913 premiere by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes actually triggered a riot in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris—and his later compositions were hardly less influential. A Russian émigré who held the Soviet Union in fathomless contempt, he spent most of his adult life in France and the U.S., cultivating an image of stylistic statelessness and claiming to be a citizen of the musical world; in return, composers throughout the West adopted his "international style" of tonal modernism.

Stravinsky's reputation rested not merely on the quality of his music but also on the fact that he was the only modern composer to be a media idol. His involvement with ballet, the most glamorous of the arts, put him in the public eye early on.

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Thereafter, he was the willing subject of countless newspaper articles, magazine profiles, and TV documentaries; his music was even featured in a Hollywood movie, Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. He coauthored eight highly quotable books in which he set forth his controversial theories about music, and produced theatrical works in collaboration with such famous writers as W. H. Auden, Jean Cocteau, and André Gide, thus engaging the attention of literary intellectuals who might otherwise have taken little note of his work.

None of this mattered, however, to the postwar avant-garde, which preferred the twelve-tone music of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern. Although Stravinsky's conversion in the late 50's to Schoenbergian serialism kept his avant-garde stock high for a little longer, by the time of his death in 1971 the plaudits of the mass media were out of sync with the opinions of musical tastemakers in Europe and America; these dismissed him as a diehard reactionary who had waited too long to acknowledge the historical inevitability of atonality. But the tastemakers were wrong, and with

the restoration of tonality and the demise of the atonal avant-garde, Stravinsky's music has once again returned to the limelight.

Not coincidentally, Stravinsky scholarship has in recent years become far more serious and penetrating, uncovering basic biographical facts the composer had sought to conceal. His early activities in prerevolutionary Russia, obscured by the inaccessibility of primary source materials and by his subsequent status as a Soviet "unperson," had left Western researchers with little choice but to take his own statements at face value. But with the publication in 1996 of Richard Taruskin's *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, it became possible at last to see him not as the self-made cosmopolitan of his own wishful thinking but as a composer whose sensibility remained profoundly Russian his whole life long.

Building on Taruskin's pioneering work, the English critic and musicologist Stephen Walsh has now brought out *Stravinsky, A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882-1934*,* a superb first installment of a projected two-volume biography. This work,

* Knopf, 698 pp., \$35.00.

when it is finished, promises to be of landmark significance in reestablishing the real Stravinsky—rather than the “international” Stravinsky of myth—as the central figure in the history of modern music.

IGOR FYODOROVICH Stravinsky was born in 1882, the third of four sons of a distinguished operatic basso. The Stravinsky family lived in St. Petersburg, Russia’s most artistically cultivated city, and young Igor was exposed to classical music from early childhood, starting piano lessons at the age of nine. He was not a prodigy, however, and his father discouraged him from the formal study of musical theory; it was not until 1902, shortly after his father’s death, that Igor began to work closely and intensively with Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, the composer of *Scheherazade*.

Rimsky-Korsakov was a Russian nationalist who in old age had become an ultraconservative academic. Though his own technique was impeccable, the musical establishment over which he presided was provincial in the extreme. Stravinsky absorbed Rimsky-Korsakov’s methods with astonishing speed—particularly his brightly colored orchestral palette and interest in Russian folklore. But he was already too old to internalize fully the principles of classical sonata-allegro form, instead favoring the ad-hoc musical structures to which he had become accustomed through his early exposure to Russian, Italian, and French opera. This preference would later also facilitate his break with Austro-German tradition.

What “deprovincialized” Stravinsky was his association with Serge Diaghilev, the leader of a group of dilettante aesthetes who published a magazine called *Mir isskustva* (“The World of Art”) and had recently begun presenting seasons of Russian opera and ballet in Paris. The group’s aesthetic, as Walsh explains, was sharply at odds with the cultural orthodoxies of late Czarist Russia:

Mir isskustva embodied what amounted to a radical conservatism in its attitude to art and design; it sought to restore the “old” ideal of beauty to its place at the very center of artistic consideration. It concerned itself exclusively with questions of design, color, and form, and had no truck with social or political goals, did not bother its head about the psychology of perception or the existentialist agony, and did not believe . . . that the world could be changed for the better by right-minded art.

A born impresario who found in the Ballets Russes the ideal outlet for his creative energies, Diaghilev was looking for a young composer to supply “advanced” music for an all-Russian ballet to be choreographed by Michel Fokine. Stravinsky signed on, and the result was *The Firebird*, a Rimskian score whose 1910 premiere made him famous overnight, simultaneously establishing the Ballets Russes as a major force in the modern movement in art.

Dance suited Stravinsky—it brought out the innate rhythmic thrust that was central to his musical character—just as the iconoclastic cultural climate of prewar Paris suited his antiromantic streak. Accordingly, his next collaboration with Fokine, *Petrushka* (1911), in which Vaslav Nijinsky danced the title role of a melancholy puppet that comes to life, was a far more adventurous production, fusing Russian folk and popular tunes and cracklingly bitonal harmonies into an arrestingly fresh, unambiguous modern whole.

Stravinsky was hardly the only composer of his generation longing to escape from the claustrophobic cul-de-sac of post-Wagnerian romanticism, with its congested orchestral palette, ultrasaturated chromatic harmonies, and hyperelaborate formal structures. Claude Debussy had been trying to do the same thing for two decades, and Schoenberg had abandoned traditional tonality three years

earlier. But it was the Stravinsky of *Petrushka* whose approach to modernism proved the most influential. That approach, Walsh points out,

heralded a complete change in the way musicians, and in particular creative musicians, thought about music. It freed rhythm once and for all from the old regularities, the old four-bar schemes, and allowed it to react directly to variations in the melodic phrase. In the same way, harmony, instead of obeying textbook grammatical rules, became simply a matter of sonority allied to melody. . . . The consequences of such freedoms would soon be very apparent in Stravinsky’s own work. The fact that, for the time being, he was able to present them in so highly palatable a form, at a time when modern music was increasingly taking refuge in private worlds of agonized expression and opaque language, is not the least achievement of this dazzling score.

In *Le Sacre du printemps*, Nijinsky’s ballet about a sacrificial virgin who dances herself to death to propitiate the ancient Russian gods of spring, Stravinsky would part company still more forcefully with romanticism. Instead of organically developing musical themes according to traditional concepts of tonality-based form, he assembled a suite of individual episodes in which tonal and bitonal harmonies are perceived by the listener as seemingly free-standing entities—more like the colors in a painting than the interlocking grammatical particles of a musical statement—through which are woven folksong-derived melodic fragments. (In one episode, the orchestra hammers out a single bitonal chord over and over again.) Forward momentum is not the product of harmonic tension and relaxation but arises from the violently assertive motor rhythms and ostinatos that propel the dancers on stage.

Even today, *Sacre* can sound shocking to ears unacquainted with the language of musical modernism. (“It

haunts me like a beautiful nightmare," Debussy told the composer after hearing it for the first time.) But although Stravinsky used tonality in a nonfunctional way, he did not abandon it: *Sacre* is still constructed out of recognizably tonal harmonic combinations, and its high level of dissonance can only be understood by reference to consonance. It is the work of a conservative who sought not to repeal the natural order but to revive and refresh it through radical means.

STYLISTICALLY SPEAKING, the sensational premiere of *Sacre* left Stravinsky with nowhere to go. The next few years were spent working out the implications of his recent harmonic and rhythmic discoveries, a process that led to the composition of *Les Noces* ("The Wedding," 1914-23), a ballet-cantata about a Russian peasant marriage ceremony in which the vocabulary of *Sacre* is used with immense skill and sophistication to evoke a religious ritual. But this piece, like *Sacre* before it, was too formally arbitrary—and too narrowly focused—to serve as the basis of a life's work. The composer of *Sacre* had a language; what he needed now was a style. He found it by looking backward.

Stravinsky had already experimented with smaller, wind-dominated ensembles in *L'Histoire du soldat* ("The Soldier's Tale," 1918) and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920), and had explored 18th-century idioms in *Pulcinella* (1920), a Diaghilev ballet based on themes by the Italian baroque composer Giambattista Pergolesi. Now, in the Octet for Winds (1923), he coupled his motor rhythms and idiosyncratic tonal procedures with traditional sonata-allegro form in a wonderfully laconic piece whose crisp woodwind timbres he described as "dry, cold, and transparent, like an 'extra dry' champagne."

In an article called "Some Ideas About My Octet"—the first of many such self-explanatory pieces he would publish in coming years—Stravinsky

told why he had turned away from the violence and splendor of his Russian ballets:

My Octet is not an "emotive" work but a musical composition based on objective elements which are sufficient in themselves. . . . In general, I consider that music is only able to solve musical problems; and nothing else, neither the literary nor the picturesque, can be in music of any real interest. The play of the musical elements is the thing.

Here once again, he was not alone; other composers had experimented with similar ideas. But it was Stravinsky's adoption of musical "objectivity" that formed the basis of the tradition-oriented, essentially conservative style of modernism that soon came to be called "neoclassicism." It was a style very much of its time—but also very deeply rooted in the particular circumstances of Stravinsky's life.

World War I and the Russian Revolution had laid waste to the orderly world of Stravinsky's youth, while the art-for-art's-sake aestheticism of the Diaghilev group had become too decadent to serve as a basis for further development. It was at this moment that he encountered the artistic theories of the neo-Thomist Roman Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, whose *Art and Scholasticism* (1920) posited a religious basis for the autonomy of art:

Art . . . remains outside the line of human conduct, with an end, rules, and values which are not those of the man but of the work to be produced. . . . Hence the despotic and all-absorbing power of art, as also its astonishing power of soothing: it frees from every human care, it establishes the *artifex*, artist or artisan, in a world apart, cloistered, defined, and absolute, in which to devote all the strength and intelligence of his manhood to the service of the thing which he is making.

Though Stravinsky was careful to point out that "I follow in my art an

instinctive logic and . . . do not formulate its theory in any other way than *ex post facto*," Maritain's ideas gave focus to his own instincts. Three years after finishing the Octet, he rejoined the Russian Orthodox Church in which he had been baptized as a boy; by then, the innovations of the Octet had similarly coalesced into the musical style of his maturity. In the expansively lyrical *Apollo* (1929), his last ballet for Diaghilev (as well as his first collaboration with the great Russian choreographer George Balanchine), and the Symphony of Psalms (1930), a magnificently austere, Orthodox-flavored setting for chorus and orchestra of the Vulgate Latin translations of Psalms 39, 40, and 150, neoclassical modernism came decisively into its own.

FOR MUCH of the following two decades, neoclassicism was the prevailing style of Western classical music. French composers such as Francis Poulenc found it all but indispensable in developing their own idioms, while the French composition teacher Nadia Boulanger introduced a generation of American pupils, most famously Aaron Copland, to its principles.

Meanwhile, Stravinsky himself poured forth a stream of memorable neoclassical works, including the masterful Violin Concerto (1934), Symphony in C (1940), and Symphony in Three Movements (1945); the hauntingly dark ballet score *Orpheus* (1947), written for Balanchine to choreograph; and such delectably fizzy pieces of "light music" as *Scènes de ballet* (1944) and *Ebony Concerto* (1945), the latter composed for the big band of the jazz clarinetist Woody Herman. He also coauthored two books, the poker-faced *Autobiography* (1936) and *Poetics of Music* (1942), a group of six lectures originally delivered at Harvard in which he expounded his Maritain-derived theory of musical objectivity.

For Stravinsky, musical order served as a substitute for the lost po-

litical order of prewar Europe. Fearing that "the fundamental laws of human equilibrium" were being revoked by politicians of the Left, he joined many of his fellow artists in flirting briefly but ardently with Italian fascism—he once described Mussolini as "*the one man who counts today in the whole world*"—and while there is no evidence that he found Hitler sympathetic, he continued to conduct in Germany until the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. Even though his music figured later that year in the notorious *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate Music) exhibition, it was not banned by the Nazis until 1940. By then, Stravinsky had already come to the conclusion that Paris was no place for an *entartete* composer; he emigrated to the U.S. in 1939, becoming a citizen in 1945.

After the war, he composed *The Rake's Progress* (1951), a full-length opera set to a libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, based on the series of engravings of William Hogarth. This consciously Mozartian work, Stravinsky's longest composition, was a summa of the neo-classical idea. But it came at a time when a new generation of composers, longing to make their own mark and sharing in the widespread desire for radical change that followed the horrors of World War II, was starting to repudiate neoclassicism and take up the banner of Schoenbergian serialism.

Having spent the preceding four decades in the limelight, Stravinsky was keenly aware of this change in fashion; moreover, his own creative energies were flagging as he entered his eighth decade, and the completion of *Rake* had left him exhausted. It was around this time that he began working with a young American conductor named Robert Craft who was interested in serial music and who exposed the older composer to it systematically. As Craft has recalled of that period, "Stravinsky, for the first time in his life, suffered from a fear that his music was being superseded."

The death in 1951 of Schoenberg,

his longtime rival, freed Stravinsky to experiment with serialism. At first he proceeded with caution, composing *Agon* (1957), a polystylistic tour de force for George Balanchine's New York City Ballet that begins and ends diatonically but gradually works its way in the central pas de deux into a highly individual adaptation of twelve-tone technique. Later on, he embraced the method wholeheartedly, composing in a fully serial style for the remainder of his life, though the extreme concentration of the pieces he produced failed to conceal the diminished inspiration of an octogenarian.

From the early 50's onward, Stravinsky also devoted more and more time to his conducting career, on which he had originally embarked in the 20's to help support his large family. He recorded and re-recorded most of his major works. Simultaneously, he produced six published volumes of wit, often outrageous "conversations" with Craft in which he discreetly rewrote the story of his younger years to bring it more into line with his subsequent conversion to the gospel of objectivity. These were the years in which he became an icon-for-rent—the World's Greatest Composer—while simultaneously falling out of favor with young avant-gardists who had no interest in his passion for order. Ill health finally forced him into retirement in 1967, and he died four years later, at once idolized and disdained.

DID STRAVINSKY embrace serialism solely to remain in vogue, or were there deeper causes? Late in life, he described himself to Craft as "a double émigré, born to a minor musical tradition and twice transplanted to other minor ones." Taruskin cites this remark as evidence that Stravinsky "envied the Germans their traditions," to the point where he eventually lost faith in the significance of his own break with them and even felt the need to conceal the Russianness of his early work.

Such uncertainties, though not unheard-of in the elderly, should not deceive us into doubting the triumphant success of Stravinsky's revitalization

of the classical style. Schoenberg had likewise determined to revive that style, but his approach was the exact opposite of Stravinsky's. Taking for granted the permanent primacy of the Austro-German tradition, Schoenberg sought to energize it by filling its overfamiliar forms with nontonal content; Stravinsky, conversely, saw that what was exhausted was not tonality but the increasingly rigid language of post-Wagnerian Austro-German romanticism. This he jettisoned in the quintessentially Russian *Petrushka* and *Sacre*.

To be sure, Stravinsky's rejection of romanticism would have meant nothing without the galvanizing example of his own music. Though he liked to play at being an intellectual, he did not write music to illustrate some abstract theory of art. Rather, he wrote it to be performed, heard, and danced—to give pleasure to body and mind alike. "Every measure that Igor Fyodorovich ever wrote is good for dancing," Balanchine once said, and the literary critic Edmund Wilson paid tribute to the comparable effect of his music on the receptive intellect:

Stravinsky has meant a good deal to me—more than any other contemporary artist in any nonliterary art. It is inspiring for any kind of craftsman to have the spectacle of such a sustained career—the artist always himself and always doing something different, but always doing everything intensely with economy, perfect craftsmanship, and style. . . . I'm not in the least religious, but I think it's significant and admirable that Stravinsky should begin every day with a prayer.

Nor was that daily prayer a pose. It echoes and re-echoes throughout the *Symphony of Psalms*, a reaffirmation of the glory of God that begins in astringent lamentation and ends in radiant certitude. Here, as in Stravinsky's other supreme masterpieces—*Sacre*, *Les Noces*, *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, *Apollo*, the *Symphonies in C* and in *Three Movements*, *Orpheus*, *Agon*—one encounters unforgettably moving inti-

mations of the divine order, enlivened by a surging, proliferating rhythmic vitality that gladdens the heart.

No doubt the media's elevation of Stravinsky to the position of "composer of the century" was partly responsible for the postwar decline of

his reputation. Musical modernism has been far too rich in noteworthy accomplishments to allow the singling-out of one "greatest composer," and Stravinsky, despite his unique and permanent historical significance, was merely one of many musical gi-

ants who walked the earth between the wars. Still, there can be no doubt that his refined yet passionate music embodied much of what was best about the 20th century, or that it will be played—and loved—throughout centuries yet to come.

Stravinsky on CD: A Select Discography

STRAVINSKY SPENT much of the second half of his life touring as a conductor, in the process recording some of his works as many as three times each. The performances dating from the 40's and early 50's are usually the strongest, and many of these, including his 1940 recording with the New York Philharmonic of *Le Sacre du printemps*, have been reissued in two collections. *Stravinsky Conducts Stravinsky: The Mono Years, 1952-1955*, contains pristinely remastered versions of *L'Histoire du soldat*, *Pulcinella*, the Octet for Winds, and the Symphony in C (Sony Classical MH2K 63325, two CD's); the second, *Stravinsky Conducts Stravinsky: The American Recordings*, offers dull-sounding transfers from the original 78's of the *Firebird* Suite, *Sacre*, *Scènes de ballet*, *Ebony Concerto*, and the Symphony in Three Movements (Pearl GEMM CDS 9292, two CD's).

While certain of Stravinsky's own recordings (including most of the above-mentioned ones) are first-rate, others have long since been bettered. Unfortunately, more than a few of the finest Stravinsky performances by other artists are presently out of print. But these CD's, arranged by date of composition and all available at press time, rank among the best:

1911: Pierre Monteux conducted the Ballets Russes premiere of *Petrushka*, and his beautifully controlled 1959 recording with the Boston Symphony is among the few to have been made by a distinguished symphonic conductor who also led staged performances of the ballet (RCA Victor Living Stereo 63303).

1913: Igor Markevitch, Diaghilev's last protégé, made a 1959 recording of *Le Sacre du printemps* with London's Philharmonia Orchestra that is memorable for its combination of tonal savagery and textual accuracy (Testament SBT-1076).

1914-23: Leonard Bernstein's recording of *Les Noces*, featuring an ensemble of English singers and percussionists and the pianists Martha Argerich, Homero Francesch, Cyprien Katsaris, and Krystian Zimerman, is explosively robust (DGG-23251).

1920/1930: Many of Pierre Boulez's Stravinsky recordings lack vitality, but his recent versions with the Berlin Philharmonic of *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and the Symphony of Psalms are both tonally lucid and rhythmically direct (DGG 57616).

1931: Itzhak Perlman's full-blooded rendition of the Violin Concerto, incisively accompanied by Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony, remains unrivaled (DGG 47445).

1940/1946: The Symphony in C is available in an elegant yet vigorous performance by Michael Tilson Thomas and the London Symphony, coupled with an equally fine Symphony in Three Movements (Sony Classical SK 53275).

1947: The conductorless Orpheus Chamber Orchestra performs *Orpheus* with a unanimity of ensemble rarely heard in more conventional performances (DGG 59644).

1951: *The Rake's Progress* has been recorded several times, most recently—and most effectively—by the English tenor Ian Bostridge, the Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, the Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, and the London Symphony, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner (DGG 59648, two CD's).

1957: By far the best recording of *Agon* is the recent version by Michael Tilson Thomas and the London Symphony included in *Stravinsky in America*, a program of works composed after Stravinsky moved to the U.S. (RCA Victor Red Seal 68865).

In addition, Herbert von Karajan's staggeringly virtuosic 1977 performance with the Berlin Philharmonic of *Le Sacre du printemps* has just been reissued in Europe as part of Deutsche Grammophon's *The Originals* series, coupled with Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. This CD can now be ordered directly from England via www.amazon.co.uk, and will be released in the U.S. later this year. An earlier CD, imported copies of which can still be found in some larger stores, paired *Sacre* with an exquisitely poetic *Apollo*. (Karajan's 1966 *Sacre*, currently available from DGG in a coupling with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, should be avoided.)

The rest of these items can be purchased online by viewing this article on COMMENTARY's website: www.commentarymagazine.com

Books in Review

The Zionist Idea

The Jewish State:
The Struggle for Israel's Soul
by Yoram Hazon

Basic. 433 pp. \$28.00

Reviewed by
Hillel Halkin

YORAM HAZONY is the young, American-born director of the Shalem Center, a neoconservative think tank in Jerusalem. He is also a trenchant critic of the post-Zionist—or, as he would call it, anti-Zionist—tendency in Israeli cultural and intellectual life, which holds that Israel is now “mature” enough to acknowledge its many sins against the Arabs, jettison its specifically Jewish baggage, and become a multicultural “state of all its citizens.” That such a contention is, at best, premature, and that it is in fact seriously endangering Israel’s ability to

HILLEL HALKIN, an Israeli essayist, is the author/translator of *Grand Things to Write a Poem On*, a “verse autobiography” of the medieval Hebrew poet Shmuel Hanagid.

resist its would-be destroyers, is something Hazon has argued cogently and passionately both in his institute’s publication, *Azure*, and in a number of American magazines, including COMMENTARY. In the Israeli context, his is an important voice that deserves to be heard.

In this very timely book, Hazon now aims to deepen his critique of post-Zionism by focusing essentially on one point: namely, that the post- (or anti-) Zionist understanding of Israel derives not solely from currents outside of, or formally opposed to, traditional Zionist discourse. Rather, it stems in large measure from strains of that discourse that have been a Trojan horse *within* Zionism itself. The point is a serious one, and it is seriously argued, though in developing it with singleminded intensity Hazon ignores the vantage of other points that are equally serious if not more so.

The Jewish State has a circular structure. It begins with a survey (divided into sections called “Literature,” “The Arts,” “Education,” “Foreign Affairs,” and so forth) of contemporary Israeli intellectual life,

which Hazon views as a disaster zone, an environment controlled by “a tight-packed and intellectually monochromatic herd whose cynicism with regard to the idea of the Jewish state has been a fixture for decades.” Indeed, these “establishment figures,” he writes, are knowingly and deliberately “paving the way to the ruin of everything [Theodor] Herzl and other leading Zionists sought to achieve [and] pushing us toward the dismantling of Israel’s character as the Jewish state.”

Next, moving back a century, Hazon sets out to trace the history of Zionist thought from Herzl to the present. His version of this history has two heroes and one villain. The heroes are Herzl, the author of the original *The Jewish State* (1896), and David Ben-Gurion—both Zionist leaders who grasped the need for a distinctively Jewish homeland for the Jewish people and for the resolute forging and wielding of the diplomatic and, if necessary, the military power required to attain it.

The villain is Martin Buber, the renowned German-Jewish philosopher and theologian who worked closely with Herzl for a brief period

as a young man before breaking with him but remaining identified with the Zionist movement. As the most intellectually prestigious spokesman for a school of Zionism that harshly criticized Herzl and Ben-Gurion's realpolitik in the name of a universal, "prophetic" morality, and that condemned as "un-Jewish" all use of coercive force against the Arabs even if this meant renouncing hope for a Jewish state, Buber more than anyone (Hazony argues) laid the intellectual groundwork for the sense of guilt about Israel's past, and the denial of its right to a particularistic future, that are post-Zionism's hallmarks.

Finally, having circled back to the contemporary scene, Hazony ends with a brief epilogue. This concludes:

The Jewish state is undergoing a cultural disintegration, the result of decades of neglect and hostility at the hands of its own intellectual and cultural leadership. If we wish for the Jewish state to end otherwise than did the Soviet Union, then we must turn our attention back to the motivating idea that has grown faint and unintelligible.

Only an idea can move a people. But an idea *can* move a people—and this means that the present, difficult circumstances of the Jewish state may be altered by the same kind of effort that originally brought them about.

THESE ARE strong words to apply to Israel's situation—and, alas, partially true. Although "disintegration" exaggerates a complex reality that is neither monolithic nor herdlike, Hazony's anxiety is no mere hypochondria. The idea of a Jewish state is in bad trouble today, and it is most in trouble, as he powerfully shows, among the state's wealthiest and best-educated classes. Nor is the invidious comparison with the Soviet Union so far-fetched. Soviet Russia is indeed an instructive example (South Africa is another) of how unexpectedly quickly a coun-

try under severe pressure can collapse once its top echelons lose faith in it. The fact that Israel's cause is a good one may not matter on the day Israelis cease to believe in it.

But Hazony is too caught up in his own analysis to ask how true it *all* is. Is it really the case, for example, that "only an idea can move a people"? Peoples, after all, are moved by many things, among them social codes, cultural attitudes, moral values, communal ties, and economic interests and opportunities. One need not be a Marxist or an anti-intellectual to acknowledge that ideas reflect realities as well as create them, and in any case are only part of what determines a nation's fate. An economically prosperous Israel at peace with its neighbors and without a large and hostile Arab minority in its midst—admittedly, a prospect not in the offing at the moment—could get along without much of a guiding idea at all.

In fact, were Hazony himself entirely consistent about the primacy of ideas, he would have picked as his second Zionist hero not Ben-Gurion but Ben-Gurion's great political rival, Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, who is hardly mentioned in this book. Not only was Jabotinsky the more serious intellectual of the two, it was his ideas about the inevitability of a military confrontation with the Arabs, the need for a pro-Western orientation, the importance of democratic institutions, the promotion of national over class interests, and the advancement of a free-market economy that the originally socialist but pragmatic Ben-Gurion came to adopt. Hazony's choice of Ben-Gurion is itself pragmatic, made partly to advance his historical narrative (Jabotinsky died a decade before the establishment of the state that Ben-Gurion headed for fifteen years), and partly to seize the high ground in a polemic against an Israeli Left to which Ben-Gurion, at least in a formal sense, belonged.

AS FOR the choice of Buber as Ben-Gurion's chief foil, that seems at

first glance less logical. A relatively marginal figure in the Zionist movement after 1910 or so, Buber did not move to Palestine until 1938 and, apart from a small circle at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he taught, remained an isolated figure until his death in 1965, viewed by Israeli intellectuals as a diasporic anachronism even as his renown spread in Europe and America. The two Palestinian/Israeli political organizations in which he was active, Brith Shalom and Ihud, never numbered more than a few hundred active adherents. How justify considering him the foundation stone of post-Zionism?

Here, however, Hazony is true to his belief in the seminal power of ideas. Although Buber's contribution to Palestinian/Israeli intellectual life may have seemed outwardly slight, it was, Hazony claims, cumulatively enormous; for as a political ally of Judah Magnes, the first president of the Hebrew University, and later as a faculty member, Buber set that institution's tone and influenced several generations of its students who went on to form their country's elite. True, from the 1930's through the 1950's, this elite supported Ben-Gurion's Zionist activism and not the views of Buber and his associates; but on an unconscious level (Hazony holds) it assimilated those views, and when the political tide turned against Ben-Gurion in the 1960's, culminating in the scandal known as the Lavon affair that led to his resignation, they surfaced in prominent places. It was thus Buber—himself heavily influenced as a young man by the neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen, a sharp anti-Zionist and critic of Herzl—who was the historical conduit by which fundamentally anti-Zionist presuppositions were smuggled into the mainstream of Israeli life.

Even for someone as unadmiring of Buber as myself, the well-documented case made against him in Hazony's book is surprisingly damning. Episode by episode, quotation

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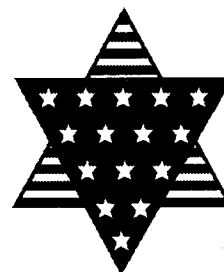
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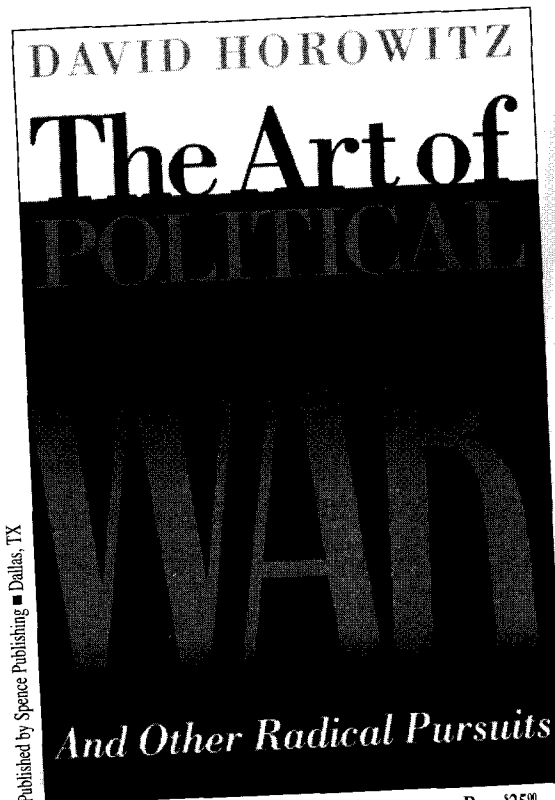
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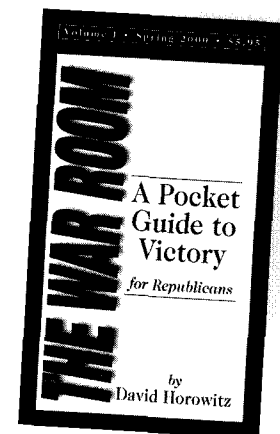


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by quotation, Hazony puts together a portrait of a man so deeply hostile to the Zionist struggle for Jewish empowerment that his alleged "Zionism" seems an exercise in hypocrisy. When one reads of Buber, speaking to the Twelfth Zionist Congress in 1921, at a time when the first outbreaks of anti-Zionist Arab violence in Palestine had claimed dozens of Jewish lives, accusing the Zionist movement of "power hysteria" for calling on Great Britain to implement the Balfour Declaration, the analogy with post-Zionist attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict clamors to be recognized.

But does this mean not only that the intellectual line from Buber and his followers to post-Zionism is a direct one but also—for this is the crux of Hazony's argument—that post-Zionism owes its existence to such a chain of transmission and would not have developed in its current form without it? Here Hazony is on shaky ground, both as a historian and as an observer of contemporary Israel.

FOR ONE thing, his account of the Hebrew University and its politics is badly skewed. It is true that, under Magnes, the university was a hotbed of "Buberian" Zionists—professors like Hugo Bergmann, Gershom Scholem, Richard Koebner, Ernst Simon, and Hans Kohn, most of them German Jews, who despised Ben-Gurion, were opposed to an aggressive Jewish majoritization of Palestine, and favored a binational Jewish-Arab state. But to maintain, as Hazony does, that this group *was* the university and controlled its curriculum and appointments throughout the British Mandate years is simply false.

Although unmentioned by him, numerous pro-Ben-Gurion and even right-wing Zionists taught at the Hebrew University in these years, too: noted scholars such as Avigdor Tcherikover, Harry Torczyner, Benjamin Mazar, Ben-Zion Dinur, Moshe David Cassuto, Jacob Nahum Epstein, Simha Assaf, Samuel Klein,

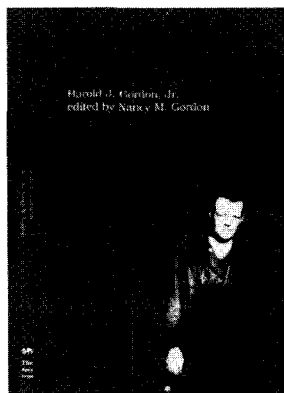
Gedalyah Alon, Joseph Klausner, and others. In fact, in the one open showdown between the two camps, an acrimonious debate in 1927-28 over the proposed establishment of a university chair in Yiddish, the pro-Yiddish "Buberians" were soundly defeated by the militant Hebraists led by the fervently pro-Jabotinsky Klausner. If the Hebrew University had such influence over Israel's subsequent elites, why, it must be asked, should the Scholems, Bergmanns, and Simons have wielded more of it than the Klausners, Mazars, and Dinurs? The answer may be that they did not: in an excellent recent article in the *New Republic*, Hazony himself mentions Dinur's enormous influence on several decades of Israeli education.

Hazony's account of the Lavon affair, which he views as a historic turning point that pitted a losing Ben-Gurion against a winning co-

alition of left-wing intellectuals, Hebrew University professors, and dovish Labor-party leaders, is similarly unbalanced. (Pinchas Lavon was a former minister of defense who in 1960 claimed to have been unfairly accused by Ben-Gurion of ordering a badly conceived Israeli intelligence operation in Cairo in 1954.) Although the anti-Ben-Gurion Left was happy to support Lavon for its own reasons, the decisive opposition to the prime minister came from his own Labor-party bosses—figures like Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, whose background and views were identical with his own. (Not only that, one of the few members of his cabinet to take his side was its greatest dove, Abba Eban.) Nor was Ben-Gurion forced out of the premiership by anyone but himself; his resignation was something that the political establishment of the day neither sought nor expected. Al-

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though the Lavon affair indeed spelled the end of the Ben-Gurion era, it was more about power politics than about the legitimacy of Jewish power.

Why, then, does Hazony insist on putting it at the center of his narrative? For two reasons, I suspect. One is that old bane of creative minds, the desire to be original. The conventional wisdom has it that it was the Six-Day war of 1967 that first brought post-Zionism out of the closet, as a reaction to the Israeli occupation and settlement of conquered territory: if so, here is a book that will show that it emerged earlier. (Indeed it did, in the "Canaanite" literary movement of the 1950's and in earlier Hebrew writers like Yonatan Ratosh—but this had nothing to do with Buber or Lavon.) More to the point, Hazony, it strikes me, chooses to dismiss the war and its consequences, which are totally overlooked by him in this book, for the same tactical reason that he overlooks Jabotinsky—that is, because, as a religiously observant Jew and a West Bank settler himself, he does not wish to be perceived as writing from a position of political partisanship. Though understandable, this is fatal to a full treatment of his subject.

IT CAN be maintained, of course, that even without the watershed of the Six-Day war, the inner dialectic of Israeli culture would have produced a post-Zionist antithesis to the Zionist thesis. Still, the cumulative changes wrought by this war were so momentous that challenging the conventional wisdom about them is a sterile pursuit.

The years after 1967 engendered a national debate that made a sizable section of the Israeli public wonder, for the first time, if it had justice on its side in its conflict with the Arabs. That debate polarized the country politically as it had not been polarized since the Irgun-Haganah split of the mid-1940's and, by passing the mantle of Zionist activism to the

Right, promoted the questioning of Zionist premises on the Left. The same years brought secular-religious tensions to new heights and saw them aligned with political ones as never before. They led to a further series of bloody confrontations—PLO terror, the Yom Kippur war of 1973, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the *intifada*—that left much of the country bitterly weary of fighting and resentful of having to do so. They created an increasingly anti-Israel mood in the international community that caused Israelis—particularly the wealthier and better-educated ones who traveled the most—to feel angrily isolated and rejected. And they ultimately produced the 1993 Oslo accords, which first euphorically raised hopes for peace and then (many Israelis felt) dashed them against the rock of right-wing obduracy cloaked in Zionist slogans. To discuss post-Zionism independently of such developments is ethereal.

Furthermore, if one wishes to trace the source of the opposition to post-1967 policies that eventually led to the intellectual rejection of Zionism, there are more obvious places to look than Buber. This opposition started largely in the left-wing kibbutzim and their associated political movements, which were a far stronger element in Israeli life then than they are now, and whose intellectual roots go back not to neo-Kantianism but to a European socialist and revolutionary tradition no less anti-Zionist than Hermann Cohen. It is worth recalling that, in the first Knesset elections in 1949, in which Buber's Ihud was too small to bother running (it vanished shortly afterward), the self-declaredly Zionist but pro-Stalinist Mapam party, whose Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim supported a binational state in British Mandate days just as Buber did, won nineteen seats or over 15 percent of the vote. Why dig for underground channels leading from the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus when a heavily-traveled highway was carrying the same freight?

Most remarkably of all, Hazony, in analyzing post-Zionism as a purely immanent development within the history of Zionism, neglects its international context. Surely it is not a coincidence that Zionism most flourished as an idea between 1900 and 1960, when nationalist and collectivist ideologies were highly popular with intellectuals in Europe and (to a lesser extent) the United States; that it went into a decline when these did; and that post-Zionism set in seriously in Israel at the same time that the tenets of deconstructionism and multiculturalism were being proclaimed throughout the West. This was not only natural, it was, ironically, consistent with the logic of Herzl, who foresaw a Jewish state creating the means for Jews to emulate, in an environment of their own, the most advanced features of Western society.

For Herzl, to be sure, this primarily meant modern technology and liberal democracy—but here, too, I am afraid, Hazony evades issues that should most concern him. As a neoconservative rooted in the American political tradition, with its classic doctrine of limited government, constitutional checks and balances, and maximum personal and economic freedom, he clearly wishes to see Israel take the political culture of America as its model (or so, at least, the publications of the Shalem Center would suggest). Yet how can an Israel strongly identified with that culture be expected to reject other aspects of contemporary America—its consumerism, its moral relativism, or its creed of personal fulfillment—that are part and parcel of post-Zionism, too? In many ways, indeed, post-Zionism is the Americanization of Israeli life.

Finally, let us suppose for the sake of argument that only an idea *can* move a people; what idea is Hazony proposing? His current book does not articulate it. What it does demonstrate, and demonstrate very well (if one takes Martin Buber more as a telling example than as the root of

all evil), is how a hybrid Zionism—in Buber's case, prophetic-morality-Zionism, although one could just as well speak of social-revolutionary-Zionism, asylum-for-the-persecuted-Zionism, or messianic-God-in-history-Zionism—will sooner or later fly apart into its originally discrete and possibly antagonistic elements. The only lasting Zionism is the unhyphenated kind that believes in a Jewish land for the Jewish people as an end in itself and not as a means to anything else.

This was Herzl's view of the matter; it is also, I think, Hazony's. Having now told us what he is against, he will, one hopes, take the next step and tell us what he is for. Given the Jewishly demoralized condition of Israel's elites, not only would this be a highly salutary act in itself, it would also serve as a better test of whether the laudable mission he has taken on himself of reinvigorating Herzl's Zionism is merely wishful thinking, or has a chance of success.

Hiders and Seekers

The Unwanted Gaze:
The Destruction of Privacy
in America

by Jeffrey Rosen

Random House. 274 pp. \$24.95

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

POLITICIANS REGISTERING concern about privacy rights are generally understood to be on the side of the angels, and Supreme Court nominees who do not share their concern have trouble getting confirmed. Judge Robert Bork's refusal to voice the expected ritual pieties about a constitutional "right

DAN SELIGMAN is a contributing editor of *Forbes*.

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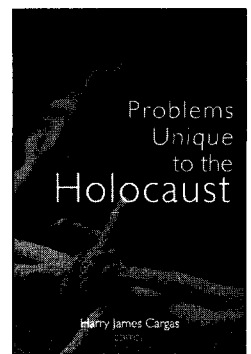
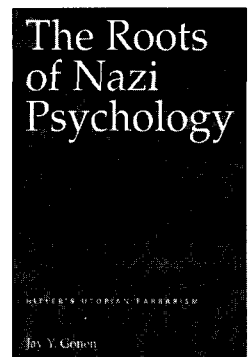
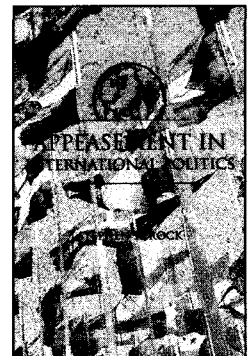
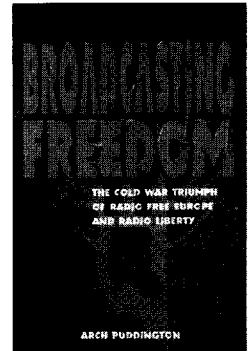
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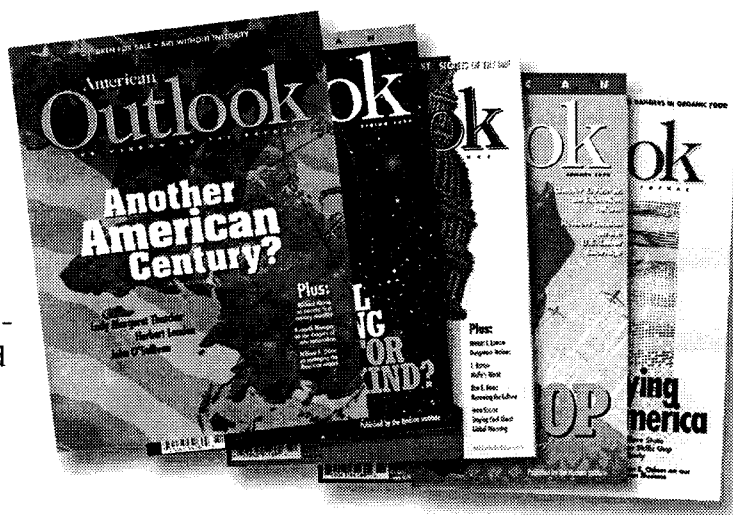
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to privacy" may have been the single largest reason for the Senate's resistance to his nomination in 1987.

As unsobly signaled by his subtitle, Jeffrey Rosen is positioning himself with the angels. The legal-affairs editor of the *New Republic* and an associate professor at the George Washington University law school, he bemoans what he calls "the erosion of privacy, at home, at work, and in cyberspace." This characterization appears in his book's prologue, and is matched in the epilogue by an equally sweeping statement about "the modern phenomenon of Pan-opticism"—an allusion to Jeremy Bentham's 18th-century design for a prison in which all inmates would feel themselves under constant surveillance.

Rosen's plan of attack is to zero in on several different (although somewhat overlapping) threats to privacy that have emerged in recent years. He is bothered especially by judicial decisions giving prosecutors more freedom to search out evidence and to rummage through individuals' private papers. His chapter on domestic privacy takes off from the fact that diaries and other personal papers have less protection today than they had in England two centuries ago when courts held that such documents were a suspect's "dearest property" and could not be used as evidence against him. Describing with admiration the English jurist who supported the controversial 18th-century political figure John Wilkes when the king's minions invaded his house and removed his private papers, Rosen points to a number of contrasting recent events entailing what he sees as horrifying affronts to privacy—among them, the exposure in the course of judicial processes of intimate details of the lives of Monica Lewinsky, Webster Hubbell, and Senator Bob Packwood.

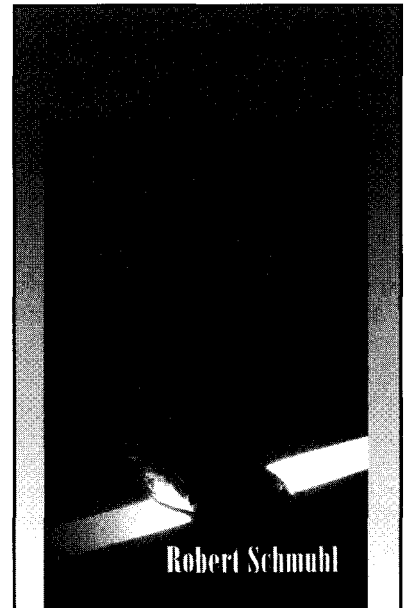
Rosen's treatment of the law of sexual harassment—"jurisprudence," he calls it—makes for perhaps the

most interesting chapter of the book, and might actually trigger some useful rethinking of how our society deals with such episodes. The evolving law in this area has both expanded the range of impermissible behavior and nailed down the employer's responsibility for preventing it—a combination creating extremely powerful incentives for the boss to snoop. If a company risks a lawsuit any time an employee is offended by sexually explicit e-mail, it will be more likely to monitor the way its computers are used. And, given the evidence (noted by Rosen) that around one-quarter of all sexual-harassment complaints reflect affairs gone sour, companies are likely to become ever more edgy about permitting consensual romance in the office.

Rosen's basic proposal to avert these intrusions is to treat certain kinds of harassment not as illegal behavior punishable by the state but as a problem more appropriately handled by tort law, i.e., damage suits. The idea is that the party offended by, say, persistent dirty jokes delivered by e-mail could bring an "intrusion on seclusion" suit against the individual jokester rather than the company.

ROSEN'S TREATMENT of this and sundry other issues is engaging and generally sensible enough, but we are inevitably brought back to his alarm-bell subtitle: is privacy in America really under grave threat and at risk of being "destroyed"?

Rosen's argument in the affirmative rests entirely on asseverations and anecdotes, some of which are less than compelling. Consider a case that he heavily emphasizes: Senator Packwood's diary. This sordid tale began when the Senate Ethics Committee, wisely or otherwise, launched an investigation into Packwood's unfortunate habit of groping ladies who crossed his path. The investigation culminated in a subpoena of Packwood's diary. But the subpoena did not just come out of the



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blue. Packwood himself put the diary into play when he cited it in support of his version of several encounters, and the committee ultimately won the right to inspect all of it because the Senator had by this time begun altering its pages.

Rosen does not mention the alterations, but, plainly determined to frame the Packwood story as a bloody outrage, assails the "gratuitously mean-spirited decision" by the *Washington Post* to publish excerpts from the diary and hold its author up to ridicule. I looked up the *Post* articles and found them utterly innocuous, typified by some gentle kidding about the Senator's love of baked apples. Everything taken together, it is hard to believe that most Americans would accept this and the other examples Rosen proffers as evidence of some generalized destruction of privacy. They would more likely conclude that privacy seems to be jeopardized mainly in the case of public figures who behave badly and then distort the truth after getting entangled in litigation.

Rosen presents no aggregate data to bolster his case, but he cannot be faulted for this; no one has yet found a way of measuring the total quantity of privacy out there. As numerous judicial luminaries have observed over the years, the concept itself is slippery. "Privacy," Justice Hugo Black wrote in his famous dissent in *Griswold*—he was disputing the Supreme Court's 1965 discovery of sweeping privacy rights in the Constitution—is "broad, abstract, and ambiguous." In different contexts, the word refers to seclusion, or secrecy, or autonomy, and it is more or less impossible to get past armchair argument in estimating its rise or decline.

One could mount a plausible argument that Americans today have far more privacy in the anonymity of big-city life than was earlier available in gossip-ridden small towns. Employers today are also much more restricted than they once were

in the questions they can put to job applicants about their family and medical backgrounds and possible arrest records. Rosen himself notes another gain for privacy: the Internet has made it easier for people in a variety of professions to work in their homes, where, free from the observation of others, they can opt for "informal dress (or undress), sloppy sitting, mumbling, and other self-involved behavior such as dancing around the living room."

If it is debatable whether privacy is increasing or decreasing, it is also debatable whether this is a big issue across the land. Opinion polls, Rosen notes, generally show strong support for privacy rights, but at several junctures he concedes that the cause lacks political muscle: most people "don't care about privacy until they have something to hide." This is a large and damaging concession by an author trying to argue that we have a big problem here. And it also raises the question, seriously scanted by Rosen, of the extent to which, and the circumstances in which, we *should* care about privacy rights.

Rosen takes it as a given that these rights are profoundly important, predictably citing Justice Louis D. Brandeis on "the right to be let alone." In the past twenty or so years, however, an alternative perspective has come onstage. Richard Posner, chief judge of the seventh circuit court of appeals, has pointed out that people want less to be "let alone" than to be able to control information about themselves, suppressing what might be thought shameful and disseminating what seems creditable. Rosen supports both the right to be let alone and the right to disclose information about ourselves selectively. "A central aspect of privacy," he writes, "is the ability to control the face we present to the world." But there are social and economic costs at issue here that he does not take into account.

We all have good and sensible

reasons for wishing to know more about others than they care to reveal. With respect to politicians and corporations, we take it for granted that detailed disclosure, not privacy, is the high road. But neither is it simple nosiness to seek out details about the backgrounds and habits of friends, lovers, day-care workers, the guy selling you a used car, prospective sons-in-law, people asking for loans, and countless others.

In short, a lot more gazing is wanted, and warranted, than Jeffrey Rosen concedes in *The Unwanted Gaze*.

The Birds and the Bees

Teaching Sex:
The Shaping of Adolescence
in the 20th Century
by Jeffrey P. Moran

Harvard. 288 pp. \$27.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

SEX AND the middle-schooler? Apparently so, according to the *New York Times*. In certain circles, we learn from a recent article, seventh-graders are now casually engaging in oral sex; some are even having intercourse. Perhaps worse, these encounters among the barely pubescent tend to be as impersonal as ATM transactions. The "kids don't even look at each other," reports one psychologist, describing their practices as mere "body-part sex."

Fortunately, the experts consulted by the *Times* know precisely how to deal with such disturbing precocity: more sex education. And the earlier, the better. As Jeffrey P. Moran reminds us in *Teaching Sex*, this now virtually automatic response to the

KAY S. HYMOWITZ is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the author of *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future—and Ours*.

dilemmas of adolescent sexuality does not come out of nowhere. Rather, it is the culmination of a century-long effort to bring scientific and medical expertise to bear on the world of youthful eros.

For Moran, a professor of history at the University of Kansas, this rationalistic project, whose various permutations over the decades he traces in useful (if sometimes tiresome) detail, has been misguided from the start. In that judgment, he is certainly right, though for entirely the wrong reasons.

SEX EDUCATION got its beginning in America at the turn of the 20th century, largely in response to an epidemic of venereal disease in the country's burgeoning big cities. Led by Prince Morrow, a New York patrician and a doctor of genito-urinary diseases, a new breed of "social hygienists," as they called themselves, proposed a fresh approach to combating sexual license. Though in many respects as proper as Mrs. Grundy herself, these reformers rejected what they saw as the Victorian "conspiracy of silence." Believing that ignorance was the problem, they were convinced that, by using an "impersonal" scientific language to dispel the mystery and confusion surrounding sex, they could lead men and women down a moral path.

Within a generation, World War I had brought about a profound shift in sexual mores, a development symbolized by a letter from the French premier Georges Clemenceau encouraging the American government to let doughboys on leave avail themselves of Paris's famed prostitutes. Concerned by the open sexuality of the flapper generation, Congress created the venereal-disease division of the U.S. Public Health Service in 1918. For their part, sex educators, though still insisting that sex should take place strictly within the confines of marriage, began to speak a new, more modern language of personality, social adjustment, and sexual fulfillment.

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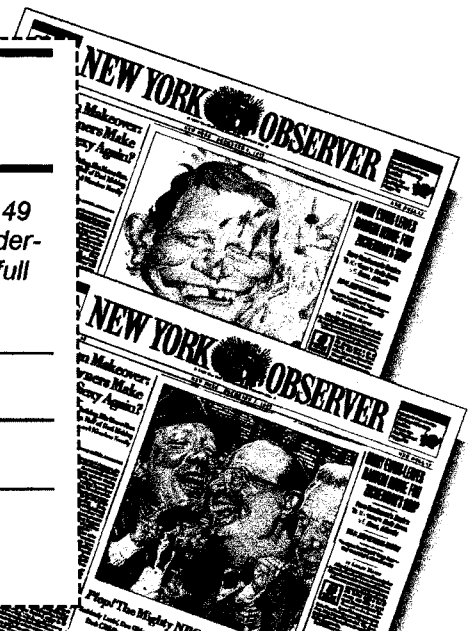
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The Depression and World War II forced sex educators to regroup once more. In response to the country's longing for a return to domestic stability and normalcy, they now invented something called Family Life Education. Though there was not much sex in this new model of sex education—an occasional film on venereal disease for boys, cautious descriptions of menstruation for girls—it did not, Moran emphasizes, mark a retreat to tradition. But it did do something else: during the 1950's, as he points out, Family Life Education “expanded the principle of public intervention,” giving public-health experts still broader authority over sexual attitudes and encouraging parents to defer to these experts.

Then came the 60's. In a largely forgotten Pearl Harbor of the culture wars, the first modern sex-education curriculum was introduced in the schools of Anaheim, California. Though the program did not directly promote premarital sex, it provided seventh graders with detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse and briefed seniors on the particulars of birth control. Guidance from a teacher gave way to coeducational discussion groups, meant to encourage students “to question adult beliefs” and “to examine the reality of adult behavior.” Although many parents were aghast, and the responsible officials were quickly ousted, the future had arrived.

In recent decades, Moran documents, sex educators have gone farther and farther in their determination to be “realistic rather than moralistic.” This has meant accommodating not only increased sexual activity among teenagers but also new attitudes toward divorce, sex roles, and cohabitation. Public-health crises have also played a major role in expanding the reach and explicitness of sex education. Feminist and gay-rights activists, along with groups like Planned Parenthood and the Sex Information and Education Council of the United

States, have seized upon the AIDS problem to argue, as a matter of life and death, for instructing students in everything from tolerance of homosexuality to the merits of masturbation.

True, not everyone has stood still for this. “Traditionalists”—a term that Moran applies to everyone from the John Birch Society to ordinary parents opposed to teaching eighth-graders how to put condoms on bananas—have succeeded in overturning a number of local curricula, and have even introduced their own alternatives, like the popular “Sex Respect” program. Moreover, their conservative allies on Capitol Hill have redirected federal funding so that it now favors “abstinence-only” programs. Supporters of what might be called the Anaheim model are therefore increasingly on the defensive, though the model itself is still commonplace enough.

WHAT UNITES this long and rather varied history? In Moran's eyes, it is the unrelenting “instrumentalism” of sex educators—that is, their tendency across the decades to present sex education as nothing more than a tool for fighting disease, or as a form of public-health program. From turn-of-the-century “social hygienists” to the creators of “Sex Respect” who point to herpes and AIDS as primary reasons to avoid premarital intercourse, sex educators have always spoken the supposedly value-neutral language of science, attempting to tame the impulses of youth with appeals to enlightened self-interest.

The problem, as Moran at least partly recognizes, is that sex education cannot be separated from values, and that its proponents, despite their air of scientific detachment, inevitably give voice to the changing attitudes of American society.

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Even more damning, in light of its pretensions, there is little evidence that sex education has ever had much effect on actual sexual behavior, whether one considers contraceptive use or rates of intercourse and pregnancy.

Had Moran simply stopped at this point, his history would have performed a useful service. Sex education *has* been a flop, whether because of its supposed reliance on the mere "facts of life" or, more likely, because it merely serves as a handmaiden to social attitudes—attitudes that at least since the 60's have been increasingly latitudinarian. But in the spirit of Michel Foucault, the great postmodernist guru of sex, Moran feels the need to go farther, challenging the very idea that "adolescent sexuality" should be viewed as a "hazard" at all, let alone that it needs to be "regulated." As he sees it, the sheer maturity of today's young people—a point he establishes primarily by quoting several fourteen-year-olds who complain that their parents treat them like children—should lead us to question "whether 'adolescence' is still a useful category." What is needed, he suggests, is a new form of sex education, one that will jettison the faux-scientific and regulatory approach and frankly recognize "the diversity of desire in different ages and different places."

Would this entail giving a green light to the "body-part sex" of the thirteen-year-olds featured lately in the *Times*? Unfortunately, such increasingly common scenes do not figure in Moran's account—which may explain why his own prescriptions seem so utterly ungrounded in contemporary reality. For what such scenes make unmistakably clear is that the issue today is hardly the pervasive "regulation" of youthful sexuality but rather the opposite. Our adolescents live in a world in which families, religious organizations, and other institutions of civil society have largely ceded the job of shaping sexual mores to a market-

driven popular culture that is all too ready to treat the youngest of teens as "mature" adults—and to sex educators who are that culture's willing collaborators if not its advance scouts.

In short, just as Moran suggests, sex education is part of the problem rather than part of the solution. And so, in the end, is he.

Mogul

The Operator:
David Geffen Builds,
Buys, and Sells the
New Hollywood
by Tom King

Random House. 670 pp. \$25.95

Reviewed by
Noah D. Oppenheim

DAVID GEFFEN, the wealthiest of Hollywood's wealthy tycoons, has been in the thick of almost every major pop-culture trend since the late 1960's. He booked the rock group Crosby, Stills & Nash at Woodstock, made Tom Cruise a star in *Risky Business* (1983), and is part of the mighty triumvirate that in 1994 launched Dreamworks SKG, the most significant new entertainment company since United Artists was founded in 1919. Moreover, as perhaps the most influential open homosexual in America and a close friend of Hillary and Bill Clinton, Geffen is, without question, as significant a power-broker as one can find in today's Hollywood.

He is also fiercely protective of his own reputation. By the time Tom King, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, first approached him in 1996 with plans for a book, Geffen had already quashed the efforts of other would-be biographers by orches-

NOAH D. OPPENHEIM, *here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is a writer living in Washington, D.C.*

trating highly effective campaigns of silence among his friends and associates. This time, however, after months of being cajoled, he ultimately agreed to cooperate, consenting to sit for interviews and actually encouraging his friends to do the same.

But then, a little over a year later, Geffen withdrew his support, condemning the emerging book as sensationalistic trash and reportedly pressuring Random House to keep it from reaching the bookstores. Of course this only heightened expectations, particularly among Geffen's legions of enemies, that the Hollywood magnate would at long last be getting his just deserts. But not so: anyone looking for a tell-all romp is bound to be disappointed by *The Operator*; whatever salacious gems King was able to mine, few are on exhibit here. What the book does make unmistakably clear is how thoroughly unpleasant (for want of a stronger word) Geffen is. King was ultimately able to interview close to 300 people; the portrait that emerges from his labors is of a man at once insatiably ambitious and wholly without mooring or scruples.

GEFFEN WAS born into a dysfunctional family of Jewish immigrants in 1943 and raised in Brooklyn. His mother, a successful seamstress, is described here as overbearing and aggressive; his father as meek, pathetic, and "henpecked." What role this dynamic might have played in the development of Geffen's sexuality is never explicitly stated, though King offers insinuation enough.

By the time Geffen was thirteen, he displayed "not only a blatant lust for money but a remarkable lack of self-control." On the evening of his bar mitzvah, according to King, the young honoree could not wait to rush off to the bathroom to tally his loot. Active in high-school theater, he often journeyed to Broadway as much to scalp tickets as to enjoy the shows.

After graduating from high school,

Geffen fabricated a connection to the recording industry producer Phil Spector and claimed a degree from UCLA in order to secure a mailroom job at the prestigious William Morris agency in New York. He rose quickly through the ranks, not only by working harder than everyone else but also by reading confidential memos, taking credit for work done by others, and ingratiating himself with the agency's straitlaced head, Nat Lefkowitz. It was Lefkowitz who shepherded Geffen up to the post of talent agent, shielding him from the wrath of the many coworkers on whom he stepped along the way.

By 1969, Geffen had left William Morris to form a new management company in Los Angeles; two years later he launched his own label, Asylum Records. King recounts in exhaustive detail how, during the 1970's, through sweat, luck, and conniving, Geffen built a rock-and-roll empire that at one moment or another included such giant stars as Jackson Browne, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, the Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Carly Simon, and Bob Dylan.

After selling Asylum to Warner Brothers in 1972 and going through a disastrous stint at Warner's movie division, Geffen returned with a vengeance in 1980, hoping to repeat his former success in music by starting a new label, Geffen Records. Despite a shaky beginning, the company eventually came to occupy the cutting edge of the 1980's heavy-metal craze and later the grunge movement of the early 90's. By then, having kept a finger in the movie business, Geffen had stumbled upon several hits at the box office as well, including the 1994 Anne Rice thriller, *Interview with a Vampire*. In 1990, he sold his record label to MCA-Universal in a deal that, at the time, made him the richest man in Hollywood.

IF THERE is a single human note that accompanies this telling of Geffen's career, it is his complete incapacity to sustain a normal relation-

ship. A strikingly high percentage of Geffen's performers have come to hate him over the years, and he has clashed with almost every one of his colleagues and peers. King's narrative is laced with stories of Geffen "screeching" or "shrieking" at friends and adversaries alike, and exploding at the slightest provocation.

He is also, it seems, a hopeless ingrate, who at one point went so far as publicly to denounce Time-Warner chairman Steven Ross as Ross lay hospitalized with terminal cancer. (Ross, whose guidance and generosity were arguably most responsible for Geffen's billionaire status, was evidently guilty of not having rewarded him adequately in the wake of a corporate merger.) King also reports how Geffen bilked loyal employees of their promised equity stakes before the enormously profitable sale of Geffen Records, cheating, among others, his per-

sonal secretary of seventeen years. And if Geffen's corporate life is strewn with human debris, his private and romantic life is no prettier a sight, notwithstanding his friendship with the President of the United States, who has invited him—current boyfriend in tow—to strategy sessions in the Oval Office.

IN SHORT, it is easy to understand why Geffen did not want his biography written. And yet this book is only a modest achievement, and not much fun to read. Nor does King succeed in putting his subject in any sort of useful context. It is hardly a revelation that Hollywood moguls are boorish and egomaniacal; the entertainment industry has been dominated by infantile rogues ever since the establishment of the original studios. Wherein does Geffen differ? Louis B. Mayer, who in 1916 founded what was to become Metro-

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Goldwyn-Mayer, used to keep a private "resting room" on the studio lot where he could exact sexual favors from aspiring starlets. Most of Mayer's cronies were of the same type, not to mention the fact that all were notorious drinkers and gamblers.

Even today, it is difficult to say that Geffen is a standout. The super-agent Michael Ovitz, for example, who happens to be his nemesis, is likewise widely known, and widely despised, for his cruelty and flagrant dishonesty.

But if in these certain respects Geffen's and Ovitz's Hollywood resembles the Hollywood of old, where it does differ, and decisively, is in its "creative products"—the tawdry music and repellent movies that (with exceptions, to be sure) bear the artistic stamp of David Geffen *et al.* Grunge is the word.

Computations

The Advent of the Algorithm: The Idea that Rules the World

by David Berlinski

Harcourt. 334 pp. \$28.00

Reviewed by
Kevin Shapiro

IN HIS most recent book, David Berlinski, the author of *A Tour of the Calculus* (1995), is by turns a mathematician, a storyteller, a would-be poet, and a philosopher. His subject is surely topical: the algorithm is the mathematical idea that lies at the

KEVIN SHAPIRO, a new contributor, is a recent graduate of Harvard College and a research analyst in the university's department of psychology.

heart of all programming code, which is what drives those great engines of modernity, digital computers. But Berlinski's book goes far beyond popularizing an important, if abstruse, innovation. Touching upon disciplines as varied as physics, mathematical logic, and psychology, it carries the reader from anecdote to technical explanation to philosophical speculation to lyrical musing and back again with barely a pause.

Berlinski, known to COMMENTARY readers for his scintillating essays on some of the most contentious issues in modern science, is at his best here when writing about mathematics. We learn at the outset that the algorithm is a kind of artifact—a finite procedure that manipulates symbols in discrete steps and according to fixed instructions. The rules of arithmetic are them-

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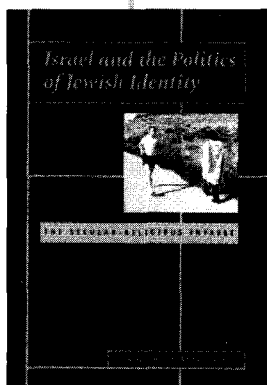
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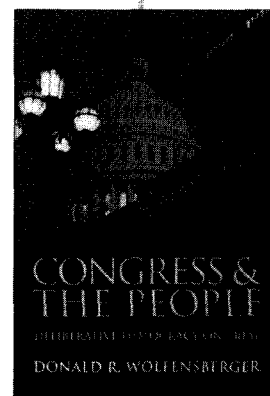
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selves kinds of algorithms, cranking out sums and products through the repetition of basic operations (add the righthand column, carry the tens) until an answer is produced.

Basically, then, an algorithm is a formal scheme for computing anything that can be computed, from a multiplication table to the entropy of a model gas. The concept seems intuitive enough: just as you cannot bake a cake without a recipe, you cannot perform a computation without an algorithm. But is an algorithm a recipe? A code? A set of rules? How can we formalize the statement, "carry the tens," in a way so simple that even a computer can understand it?

In fact, as Berlinski tries to show, the algorithm, understood rigorously, is the ultimate abstraction. Its execution is purely mechanical, requiring no intelligence or insight, and it itself is blind to the meaning of the symbols with which it operates (in the case of computers, 1's and 0's). Yet what it does is meaningful, at least to the person who needs to know that two plus two equals four and not five. According to Berlinski, this split between "form" and "meaning" was first appreciated by logicians, grappling for a way to rescue their discipline in light of Kurt Gödel's famous proof that any consistent formal system—like the rules of inference in mathematics and logic—can generate true statements that it itself cannot demonstrate to be true.

In order really to understand the algorithm, then, we need first to understand mathematical logic. And so Berlinski proceeds carefully to guide the reader through the elements of formal logic, beginning with the simple Aristotelian system of familiar syllogisms (*all dogs are mammals; all mammals are animals; therefore all dogs are animals*) and gradually expanding its scope through the insights of a series of brilliant mathematicians, each introduced to us along with his work: Gottfried Leibniz, the *echt* court philosopher who dreamed of a universal logical

language; Giuseppe Peano, the Italian farmer's son who rewrote the rules of arithmetic; the dyspeptic Gottlob Frege, founder of modern symbolic logic; and so forth.

Berlinski's descriptive portraits of these great men are as evocative as his explanations of their thought are lucid and meticulous. At each point he takes us up and down what he calls the "inferential staircase," a sort of checklist by which we can verify the steps in his reasoning. But he does not stop there. To make sure we have grasped the basic points, Berlinski enlists the aid of a cast of interlocutors, reproducing conversations with lawyers, doctors, his literary agent, a cardinal—even summoning the ghosts of Frege and the great Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges. Every now and then he leaves off logic entirely to give us a parable about the quest for ultimate truth—or an excerpt from his own amorous biography.

THE END result is an entertaining, sometimes distracting, almost always enlightening book. The laws of logic are made accessible, if perhaps not intuitive; and despite Berlinski's many detours, there is no doubt that by the time his survey is complete, we have learned something valuable about mathematical logic. Indeed, to come back after all this to the algorithm is a little like meeting the wizard of Oz, enshrined in a dazzling Emerald City built by the real heroes of Berlinski's narrative, the mathematicians Kurt Gödel, Alonzo Church, Alan Turing, and Emil Post.

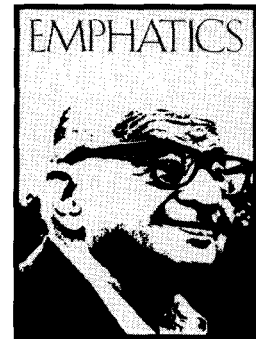
Berlinski makes it clear, in fact, that he has not brought us all this way just to see what makes computers buzz and whirl. Not that computers are unimportant; the centrality of the algorithm to information technology, and hence to the infrastructure of modern society, is what makes it relevant to every one of us. E-mail, word processing, the Internet—all are in some direct sense the product of algorithms.

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Summer 2000

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In another sense, though, the digital computer is just the wizard's machinery, a bunch of wires and transistors that execute the algorithm's commands and produce the results. What is of greater interest to Berlinski is the way the algorithm itself, the *idea* of effective computability, has changed the way we, and especially scientists, look at the world. It is his contention that it has led to philosophical and scientific sloppiness.

As natural scientists use algorithms in models that explain how the world works, Berlinski writes, they forget that these are just mechanical toys whose operations are meaningless unless and until we interpret them. Because algorithms are manmade, they cannot themselves be part of the laws of nature. Yet scientists often think, and write, as if algorithms do explain how gases work, or how a tree grows from

the DNA in a seed, or how a human being, seeing a tree, knows what it is—as if, in short, they explain consciousness itself.

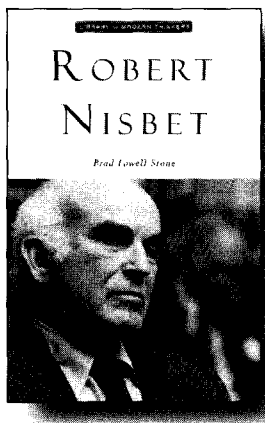
But *is* this what physicists or psychologists who use algorithms to model complex phenomena really believe? Consider Berlinski's discussion of the computational theory of mind—in a nutshell, the idea that thinking itself is a kind of computation performed by the brain, not a function of what used to be called the soul or a mysterious immaterial secretion of neural tissue. One way of testing whether a cognitive function may be computational is by implementing it in a "connectionist" network: a collection of simple data-processing units hooked up in a way that is supposed to resemble a network of neurons in the brain.

Berlinski shows us how such networks are built and alludes to some of

the things they can do, like sorting photographs of human faces based on the presence of some prominent feature (like shifty eyes). He also exposes their limitations, the most important of which (for him) is that they are utterly incapable of interpreting their own output. A network trained to recognize shifty-eyed characters, for example, does not know what shiftiness signifies; it merely extracts a set of visual features, leaving their meaning to be grasped by the human programmer.

Berlinski cannot envision how any neural network, no matter how huge or with how many data-processing units, can overcome this basic shortcoming: the gap between computation and meaning is simply too large. But there is more to the computational theory of mind than that. Yes, artificial neural networks do not do anything truly amazing—they simply perform some statisti-

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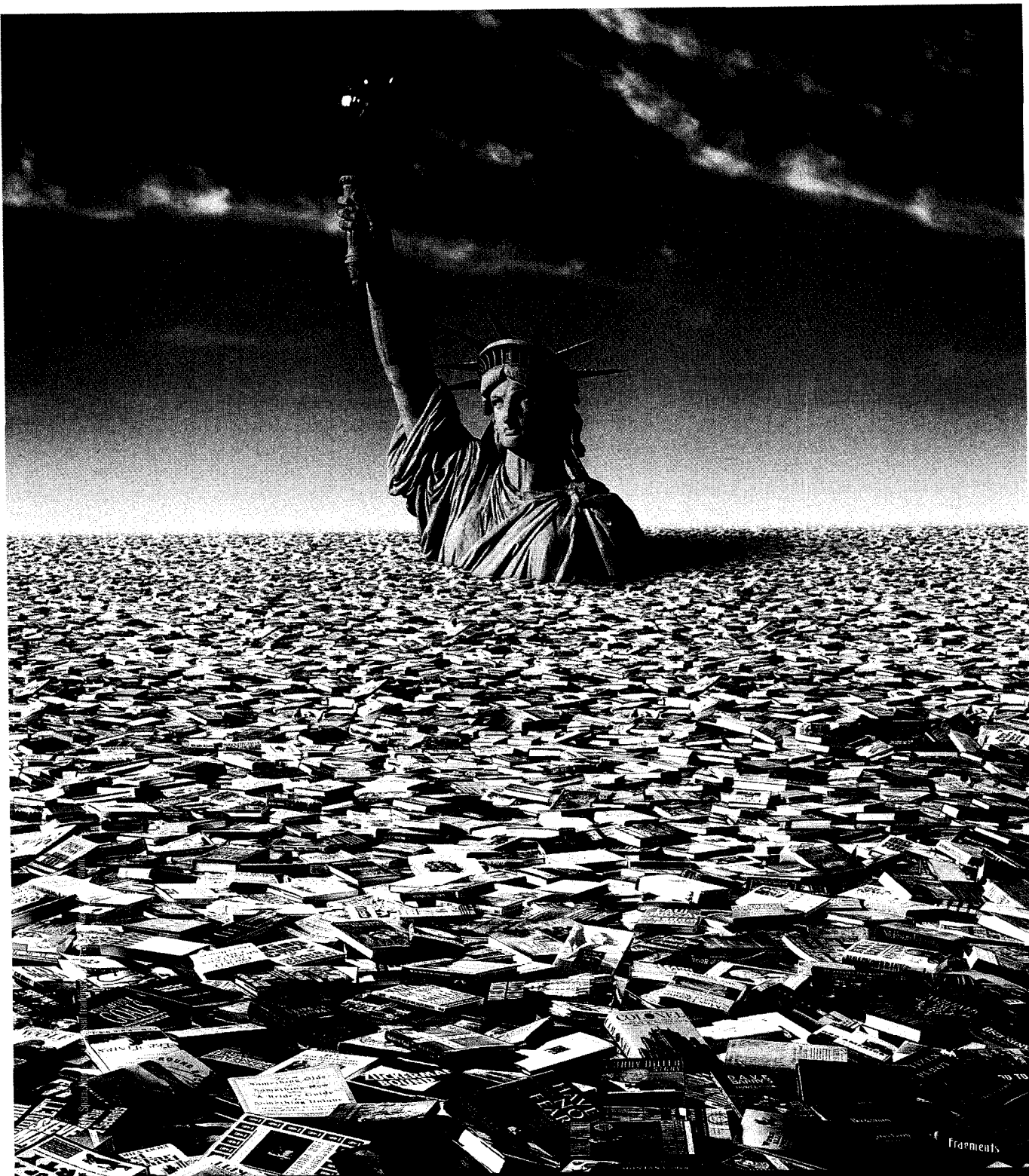
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cal operations—but, as far as most cognitive scientists are concerned, the computational theory does not force us to view the brain as one giant, ignorant neural network. More likely, they say, it is an array of little, ignorant neural networks, each performing a specialized task. Stepping back from such isolated, individual networks to interacting networks of networks allows us to see how the “consciousness gap” might be bridged—by layer upon layer of organization.

The picture of the mind that emerges resembles a sort of enormous flowchart: at the highest level are the broadest and most general “divisions” of cognition (vision, for instance), each of them composed of various subdivisions (recognition and tracking), departments (color, shape, texture), committees, subcommittees, and so forth, right down to the lowliest algorithm in charge of figuring out whether a line segment is horizontal. The computer scientist Marvin Minsky has dubbed this confederation of blind agents the “society of mind,” capturing in an ingenious phrase the notion that purpose can emerge from a cadre of seemingly purposeless operators.

Berlinski, one suspects, is not prepared to make any such conceptual leap from a single blind operator to an organization of blind operators, and no doubt he has his reasons; it is disappointing, though, that he does not take on the computational theory of mind at its strongest point (a complaint that might be entered about his treatment of other scientific fields as well). Still, that does not detract from the admirable job he has done in showing us how the algorithm works, tracing its history, and situating it within the context of human knowledge and creativity (the latter understood broadly to include parables and occasionally salacious anecdotes). *The Advent of the Algorithm* is not an academic book by any stretch, but neither is it a typical ex-

ample of popular science-writing, being designed as much to excite the imagination as to inform. It does both, and then some.

Unfinished Business

Atatürk:
The Biography of the
Founder of Modern Turkey
by Andrew Mango

Overlook. 666 pp. \$40.00

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

AMONG DICTATORS of recent times, Mustapha Kemal, who later took the honorific name Atatürk, is the exception. In common with the others, he believed that social engineering justified whatever means were required, and he had no qualms about destruction and murder. But where the others left behind nothing but the memory of their evil, Mustapha Kemal, out of the wreck of the Ottoman empire, fashioned Turkey into the thriving nation-state it is today. Official photographs of his handsome if haughty face, prominent in public places throughout the country, attest to his enduring and genuine popularity. The Turkish military, in particular, sees itself as the steadfast guardian of the nationalism he taught Turks to value above other ideals.

Andrew Mango, who was for many years in charge of the BBC's broadcasts in Turkish and has published numerous studies of Turkish affairs, has now scrupulously separated fact from the massive accretions of fiction with which both Mustapha Kemal and his faithful followers built the legend of Atatürk. He has spent many years writ-

DAVID PRYCE-JONES is the author of *The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire* and *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs*, among other books.

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ing this biography, and it is likely to remain the standard work for a long time. Only occasionally does he resort to special pleading (as in his pages on the Armenian massacre of 1915-16), but his final judgment is unmistakable: Atatürk, whom he describes as a "conservative revolutionary," was the right man in the right place at the right time.

UNTIL THE 18th century, the Ottoman empire had been a superpower, overrunning the Balkans and threatening to expand into central Europe. As sultan, the Ottoman ruler held absolute temporal power; as caliph, he simultaneously claimed the spiritual allegiance of all Muslims. But throughout the age of Enlightenment, Europeans were developing the science and technology that would underpin the influence they were soon to project across the

world. An innate sense of superiority prevented the Ottomans from perceiving the gathering danger. Infidels, they presumed, had nothing to teach them.

Mustapha Kemal was born about 1880, in Salonika, then a cosmopolitan city. The empire was already in its last throes. For thirteen years, he attended a military school. As a junior officer, he served in Syria, in Libya against the Italians, and afterward as military attaché in the formerly Ottoman-held city of Sofia, Bulgaria. Like many in his position, he despaired of reform, and dabbled in conspiracy to overthrow the regime.

In 1908, other officers undertook an unfinished or rolling coup against the sultan. These so-called Young Turks proved as incompetent as they were ambitious. At the outbreak of World War I, they struck an alliance

with Germany that would consummate the ruin of the empire they meant to save.

In the meantime, recognizing in Mustapha Kemal someone as ambitious as themselves, they kept him at arm's length. Much of his career during the war would consist of skillful maneuvering to capitalize on the mistakes and limitations of the Young Turks, to come out on top at the end.

His first real opportunity to challenge the Young Turks for leadership came when he was appointed commander of the defense forces at Gallipoli in 1915. The Western allies had anticipated that a successful campaign at Gallipoli would shorten the war, and the whole world was watching the outcome. But Mustapha Kemal happened to have reconnoitered the ground, and, asserting himself over the German officers who were nominally in

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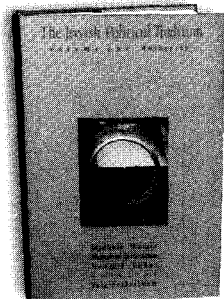
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charge of Turkish forces, he proved a brave and inspiring general. After huge casualties on both sides, the Allies withdrew in defeat. Mustapha Kemal became a national hero at a moment when heroes were needed.

A superb organizer, Kemal also proved to have diplomatic and political skills of a high order; but "the decisive factor," Mango adds, "was his self-confidence." After the war, extreme foolishness on the part of the victorious Allies played into his hands. They had already occupied the empire's Arab and European provinces. In search of spoils, French, British, Italian, and Greek forces then invaded the Ottoman heartlands. As the sultan and his ministers in Istanbul pursued a policy of appeasement and surrender, Mustapha Kemal built in Anatolia the means of resistance. In a brilliant solo performance, he set up a tame assembly to certify his powers and mobilized the Turkish army to pick off the invaders one by one. Undoubtedly, this was his finest hour.

Though he might with justice have despised the European countries in whose imperial quarrels and vanities his people had been so disastrously caught up and ruined, Kemal was no hater of Europe. On the contrary: in many a speech and many an incident, he revealed that he admired his enemies almost uncritically, while at the same time he viewed his own compatriots as contemptibly backward and superstitious, "ignoramus" living in dirty and tightly packed "oriental" towns. This shame could no longer be endured. Turkey, he insisted, had to become "a progressive member of the civilized world," and by "civilization," a favorite word of his, he meant Westernization. There was to be no distinctly Turkish or isolationist future.

In 1923, Mustapha Kemal declared himself president of the new Turkish republic. The sultan, accepting the loss of his temporal power, pleaded to be allowed to continue as caliph, even if this was only, in

Mango's phrase, "fancy-dress"; he was instead sent into exile, and would die in Paris in 1944. At home, the changes introduced by Mustapha Kemal were radical and immediate. New legal and penal codes were imported from countries like Switzerland and Italy. The Roman alphabet replaced traditional Arabic script, effectively cutting off much of the Ottoman past. Culture, manners, and dress were Westernized, down to such apparently insignificant details as the compulsory replacement of the fez by a hat. Mustapha Kemal—now Kemal Atatürk (father of the Turks), the adoption of surnames being another of his compulsory innovations—himself read and wrote French, and frequently resorted to that language among friends. A womanizer, he enjoyed nightclubs, waltzing, and drinking with his cronies. Alcoholism would contribute to his premature death in 1938.

There seems to be no explanation for the ferocity with which Mustapha Kemal attacked Islam. "The evils which had sapped the nation's strength," he declared, "had all been wrought in the name of religion." If, in his own case, he was prepared to take advantage of Muslim law to divorce his wife peremptorily, he also thought nothing of physically assaulting some Muslim cleric of whom he disapproved or pulling down a minaret because it obstructed his view. Brought under strict government control, Islam was broken as a code of loyalties and a way of life. In a swift and brutal reversal, Turks were obliged to repudiate the Ottoman assumption that their faith had entailed superiority over others.

Revolutionary as all these changes were, however, they concerned only the outward forms of Westernization, and were at a complete remove from its spirit. Western strength de-

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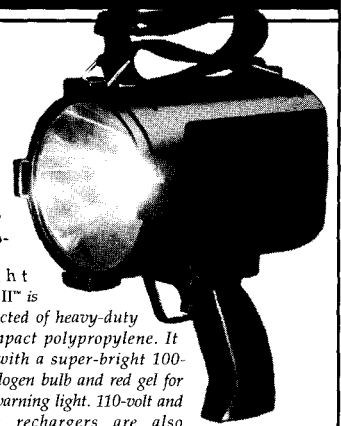
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rived in the final analysis from the spectrum of institutions, political and otherwise, through which a citizenry could express its energy. The Ottomans had had no such institutions, and the Turks did not now acquire them. Mustapha Kemal's powers were every bit as absolute as the sultan's, but, thanks to improved techniques of communication, far more effectively applied. Much as the sultan had relied on faithful janissaries to execute orders, Atatürk recruited his People's party, which held all but one seat in the assembly, to do his bidding.

Tailored to one-man rule, the resultant party-state had no place for a loyal opposition, for accountability, for free association, for civil rights, or indeed for any of the essentials of democracy. Whoever stood in Mustapha Kemal's way was murdered, either secretly or through scandalous judicial fixes; the victims included several rivals, Communists, Kurds agitating for a state of their own, Greeks and Armenians, mullahs who persisted in old-style Islam, and even unfortunate wretches who had joined in riots against wearing those compulsory hats.

Luckily—and it has been as much by luck as by skillful management—Mustapha Kemal's heirs

have been able to proceed further down the road to Westernization. Turkey is now the only Islamic country (leaving aside the questionable example of Pakistan) in which a free and fair election has led to a change of government. Even so, it still suffers from the repercussions of Atatürk's rule. The military has taken power several times on dubious nationalist pretexts, while extremists of one kind or another have engaged in campaigns of mutual and reciprocal murder. Kurds, even if they do not engage in terrorism but strive for a pluralist solution to their plight, encounter state terror in response. Immune to extirpation by decree, Islam has made a comeback, and about a quarter of the Turkish electorate now votes for the Islamic fundamentalist party.

Outside Turkey there is still more unfinished business in the legacy of Mustapha Kemal. In Arab lands, in Pakistan, and in Indonesia, other one-man rulers have emulated his example. Almost invariably soldiers, they too have begun from a position of despair and shame at the apparent weakness of their people in the face of Western preeminence. Like him, they have developed a style of nationalism that promises to redress

the balance, but in practice levers them into absolute power through conspiracy and crime. Unlike him, as often as not, they have tried to compromise with Islam, not out of any settled belief but rather to exploit it for their purposes. The intellectual and moral confusion arising from this schizophrenic procedure fosters absolutism and Islamic fundamentalism alike.

Whether Mustapha Kemal was ultimately as beneficent and creative as Mango believes is, therefore, an open question. Nationalism was not a firm enough base on which to create a modern state. A truly great man would have gone on to solve the conundrum of converting subjects of the old empire into citizens of the new polity, and would have sought to reconcile the perceived demands of modernity with the traditional faith of Islam. But at least Mustapha Kemal's admiration of the West was genuine. His many imitators have copied Western externals in order to get their own back, while inwardly resenting and even hating almost everything to do with the West and its values. Modernity in those countries therefore stays on hold, and both Islam and democracy remain beautiful but incompatible ideals.

John E. Chubb is chief education officer, Edison Schools; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education.

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much. This difference in learning, which accumulates summer after summer, helps explain the wide achievement gap that separates inner-city high school students from students in the suburbs. **A shorter summer might reduce the achievement gap and raise the standards of all students,** including those at the top.

Parents are unenthusiastic. But a six-week summer break is ample time for most family vacations, for camp, sports, and other forms of learning, or for older children to earn some necessary income.

Of course, there is always the matter of cost. A longer year requires a possible 10 percent increase in operating costs. Yet we have increased what we spend on education by much more than that over the past generation. And what do we have to show for it? Less than we might expect from an investment in more time.

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— John E. Chubb

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